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THE STORY OF A LIFE
AND
TWO SEQUELS



BY
WILLIAM A GIBBS



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THE STORY OF A LIFE,

AND

TWO SEQUELS.

BY

WILLIAM ALFRED GIBBS.

THE CRITICS' EDITION.

Largely revised, and in part re-written by the Author.



London:

PROVOST & CO.,

36, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1873.

280. n. 537.

APOLOGY

FOR

THE EARLIER EDITIONS.

No condition of life can seem at first sight so prosaic as that of a refined and well-educated family, possessing a moderate affluence, none of whose members are supposed to have committed any sensational crime, or in any way startlingly outraged the usages and opinions of society; and yet circumstances sometimes arise in such lives which develop a quiet nobleness of conduct and a veiled brightness of character, worthy to be celebrated in far better verse than mine.

Classical mythologies, with their *dramatis personæ* of gods and nymphs, dryads and fauns, heroes and muses, have for centuries been the favourite stock subjects for one class of poetical achievement; and perhaps the reproductions of these old lay-figures in various disguises have been already sufficient, without any presumptuous endeavours on my part to add to the number. These reiterated attempts to galvanise a dead and extinct heathenism into a spasmodic life have given some readers the idea that "Poetry" is a dreary mechanical waxwork

Olympus, a laborious unreality, to be avoided as an intolerable weariness to the flesh. Another cause of the avowed disfavour in which this branch of literature is held by many is traceable to the fact that high imaginative powers have too often been used as a mighty wind to scatter through society the seeds of wildly incoherent Atheisms and Pantheisms, or as a subtle and glittering enchantment, wherewith to idealize crime and render vice attractive. Other readers complain that although Poetry is very constantly offered as a telescope through which we are to peep at "blameless Kings" and misty Merlins, or as a microscope by which we are to anatomise the hearts of imaginary cottagers and improbable pedlars, it is but seldom presented as a clear and faithful mirror in which the men and women of the present age may hope to see men and women like themselves reflected. Yet surely there are noble and gentle heroisms hidden away in many a seemingly prosperous English home which possess a strong claim upon poetic recognition, and of such, therefore, I have attempted some record.

NOTICES OF SECOND EDITION.

"The Story of a Life" is marked by touches of unmistakable genius, traces of poetic imagination, refinement, and taste. Many passages have in them the true and undoubted ring of poetry in the very highest sense,—lofty pure thoughts clothed in words of melody and strength. The reader's attention will be caught at once, and riveted to the very end of the poem. To write smooth, flowing, pointed, blank verse is a far more difficult attainment than may be supposed. Mr. Tennyson is a master among the few modern poets who have at all reached it; and it is no small praise to say that many pages in this book remind us of the Laureate's most finished verse."—*Standard*.

"This book of poems impresses us with the fact that there is much more interest attached to poetry which, instead of soaring into the imaginative realms of gods and goddesses, condescends to describe the joys and griefs of our native households."—*Observer*.

"In 'The Story of a Life' is painted as fair and happy a home-scene as could well be pictured. The author has the talent of expressing his thoughts and feelings in words that cannot fail to touch the hearts of his readers."—*Dublin Evening Mail*.

"Indeed, we cannot remember any recent work of literature which—with quiet accessories, a subdued manner, and a general faithfulness and simplicity of description—deals with so tragic a subject as the volume before us. A book which is full of vigorous and graceful writing, which breathes a hopeful and manly spirit, and which paints domestic life in the most winning colours, is, perhaps, most likely to attract thoughtful readers; and they cannot fail to be struck by its kindly wisdom, its earnestness of purpose, and the charming purity and sweetness of its tone."—*London Review*.

"A purer truer book than this could scarcely be written. . . . Its moral tone is high; a broad, healthy, Christian spirit is its distinguishing characteristic."—*Nonconformist*.

"The author has constructed with much skill, out of slender materials and simple incidents, a story of deep domestic interest. The moral he points is a stern one, but the language in which he enforces it is choice and elegant. To appeal to the thoughtful minds of the present time, the poet does not select his topics from the *répertoire* of the past: the story he tells refers rather to the progress of the human mind. His words bear the warm impress of the heart, and touch the reason not less than the imagination of the reader."—*Gloucester Journal*.

"Those of our readers who may not have met with this work will derive much pleasure from a perusal of it. Mr. Gibbs writes in a highly-polished but simple style, and some of the home-scenes he has portrayed are described with remarkable power. Purity of taste is shown in every line, and the interest of the story is maintained throughout."—*Edinburgh Courant*.

"Many another gleam of poetry and truthful bit of natural painting might be quoted, but we have only space for a charming song, suggestive of the lyrical ease and sweetness of the songs to be found in our elder dramatists."—*Churchman's Magazine*.

"The author is at all times master of his subject, and able to sustain, throughout, the interest of the reader, awakened with the opening stanzas. There are passages which, for purity of expression and depth of feeling, will bear comparison with the higher flights of Tennyson."—*Aberdeen Journal*.

"This is a very delightful collection of poems, alike free from the fiery passionateness of Swinburne and the enigmatical language of Browning. 'The Story of a Life,' with its sequels, is pleasantly told, in colloquial blank verse—a style well adapted for such stories. To give one or two quotations, here is a description of the youngest in a family (p. 8):—

And last the blue-eyed beauty Lilian,
The little gentle one, whose tiny feet
Would patter o'er the hall, like plashing rain,
Whose softly indistinct and half-formed words
Seemed to make imperfection beautiful.

And the following passage, describing the husband's grief at the loss of his wife, has a beautiful fancy in it:—

Oh! had he in those hours of wretchedness
Stood up in sternness, with the stoic's pride,
A blow so heavy must have broke his heart;
But in humility he bowed his head,
And that vast avalanche of grief passed down,
Leaving its streaks of snow amidst his hair,
And channelled furrows o'er his saddened brow."—*Echo*.

"C'est rêver l'héroïsme que de composer un beau poème dont l'intérêt va toujours croissant, dont la morale est admirable de pureté, dont les vers, même les vers blancs, sont une musique continuelle, seulement surpassée par quelques poésies lyriques, qui se promènent agréablement dans le cours de l'ouvrage."—*Courrier de l'Europe*.

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HAROLD ERLE :

A BIOGRAPHY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A LIFE."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Those who know Mr. Gibbs's previous poems will at once recognise the chief characteristics of 'Harold Erle.' The passages which we prefer in the present volume are those descriptive of 'Harold Erle's' youth, and the tour throughout Belgium and up the Rhine."—*Westminster Review*.

"The author of this poem reveals his high and delicate culture. 'Harold Erle' is a powerful story. There are tender touches of consummate grace ; and emotions, events, and sacrifices, are narrated, which show how fertile this theme has become in the hands of an accomplished writer."—*British Quarterly*.

"Mr. Gibbs is soon satisfied with showing that he can write as sensationally as any novelist going ; and, after this striking opening, settles down into quiet and easy verse."—*Saturday Review*.

"The story itself is one of great interest, wisely, simply, and naturally told, in graceful, vigorous language, enriched with many touches of true poetic genius ; but, in many passages, the poem rises to a far higher nobler flight, involving points of keen logic and subtle philosophy, profound religious truth and delicate criticism, such as a refined and highly cultivated intellect alone could handle and express in their present shape. The poem is divided into three sections : of boyhood, youth, and manhood, each marked by a power and beauty of its own, and all well worthy of a true poet, —for such, beyond a doubt, Mr. Gibbs may now claim to be."—*Standard*.

"It may be easily imagined how interesting such a story can be made. The reader will not willingly lay down the book without finishing it."—*Graphic*.

"The subject, in a dramatic and poetic aspect, offers strong situations, of which Mr. Gibbs has not been slow to avail himself. 'Harold Erle' is marked throughout by the same felicities of expression, the same shrewd and clear sketches of character which distinguished 'The Story of a Life.' Some charming lyrics are scattered through his pages."—*Daily News*.

"'Harold Erle' (his latest work) is a biography, and an excellently told one. Beginning with his school days, the author felicitously follows his hero's career through youth and manhood, and in graceful verse narrates the incidents which befall him. There is a love story interwoven with the plot, which enables the author to display his proficiency in this theme, whilst his descriptive power is exemplified in the following word-picture of Antwerp"—*Morning Post*.

"A poem exhibiting a yet riper development of the author's powers. In his previous work Mr. Gibbs proved the possession of poetic gifts far above the ordinary standard. He has a cultured habit of thought and a melodious distinctness of expression, avoids both periphrasis and obscurity, writes simply and to the purpose, and yet with sufficient polish to bespeak the careful artist. These graces were patent in 'The Story of a Life,' and are recognisable in a still higher form in 'Harold Erle.' "—*Orchestra*.

"The verse moves with smoothness and dignity, and exhibits a quiet grace and truthful analysis of character."—*Public Opinion*.

"'Harold Erle' is a story which it will do busy countrymen as well as townsmen good to read."—*Agricultural Gazette*.

"'Harold Erle' is remarkable for straightforward simplicity of style; the verse flows in smooth and easy rhythm, and the ideas are natural and pleasing."—*Illustrated London News*.

"To some of his readers the first portion of the present work will present the greatest attractions. The character of one of Harold's schoolmasters is thus gracefully delineated."—*The Press and St. James' Chronicle*.

"Having really a story to tell, the author does not bore the reader with endless digressions on all subjects that can possibly

be dragged into notice. The narrative in any form would attract attention, but set forth, as it is, in graceful and forcible language, it deserves a high place in public estimation."—*The City Press*.

"A very good tale, in very pleasant verse; in welcome contrast to much that is written now-a-days."—*Examiner*.

"The book closes with a charming picture of the home of Harold and his sisters in Westmoreland."—*Illustrated Review*.

"A poem by one who thinks and writes with power. There are passages of unusual excellence, and we have scarcely observed one weak or halting line. The author's former work won for him high praise, and this proves that it was well bestowed."—*Queen*.

"The story is one of noble self-denial, told gracefully and with much quiet power; and from the time the delicate but high-spirited school boy swoons under the cruel flagellation of a brutal pedagogue, to the last page, the links of the chain are unbroken, and the interest never wavers. In these days of sensuous (not to say sensual) writing, it is gratifying to see so genuine a poet with so pure a pen. Indeed, we cannot do better than quote his own description of 'Harold Erle' as our best criticism of his biographer:—

Not his the skill to shape with dainty art
Lascivious legends for a languid ear,—
Nor his the pliant voice to join the choir
Of Baal's priesthood in their choral chant
To gods of popularity and gold;
But with straightforward singleness of aim
He seized the right, and struck with it at wrong
E'en in defiance of a world in arms.

The volume closes with a magnificent set of verses by way of epilogue."—*Durham Chronicle*.

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THE STORY OF A LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM ALFRED GIBBS.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Mr. Gibbs takes a high view of life and its duties."—*Westminster Review*.

".....Undoubtedly clever, and shows much power, both of imagination and verse. It bears many traces of genius. The character of the blank verse reminds one of Wordsworth's 'Prelude.'"—*Contemporary Review*.

"The poem which gives the title to the book has the spirit of Tennyson in a remarkable degree Among the lighter pieces we may name 'Kling, Klang, and Klong; or, Everything Wrong,' which, with several others, has much of the terseness, along with the hearty homeliness, of Cowper's poems of the same kind The 'Address to Working Men' is conceived throughout in that manly yet gentle tone which so many 'working mén,' by their progress of late years in habits of thought and educational acquirements, are well calculated to appreciate."—*Inquirer*.

"The author looks on human nature with the eye of a poet. We should call him a truthful analyst of the heart, who has studied carefully and deeply, and who can record his views and conclusions in choice language. We meet at intervals with gems of no uncertain lustre, that can only be produced by the man who has inherited the gift of poetry. The volume is miscellaneous, and has lays grave and gay, all of which are thoughtful and pleasant reading."—*Public Opinion*.

"This book shows marks of unusual power. His 'Address to Working Men' is cleverly conceived and carried out; but the poems which strike us as the best are those grouped under the head of 'Sunday.'"—*Manchester Examiner*.

"Mr. Gibbs has the gifts of easy and melodious versification and narrative power."—*Sunday Times*.

"The illustrations are forcible and imaginative. We have read the volume with pleasure. The poems display considerable versatility of thought and style."—*Birmingham Journal*.

"..... This poetry has the true stamp of genius upon it. Combined with a genuine and polished simplicity of style, there is abundant evidence that the author's mind has communed with the spirit of nature, and possesses the sympathetic power which is characteristic of the true poet. 'The Story of a Life' reminds us exceedingly of the style and character of 'Enoch Arden,' though the narrative is essentially different."—*Christian World*.

"We are happy to recognise an independence of thought and style, a power of expression, a smoothness of flow, a purity of taste and of moral teaching, which bespeak considerable training, healthy pursuits, and a classical tone of mind."—*Press and St. James's Chronicle*.

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"..... We will not quote more; it is sufficient to say that 'The Story of a Life' is very good. We have much pleasure in recommending the volume to our readers."—*Queen*.

"The author of 'The Story of a Life' possesses more than the ordinary share of poetic talent. In his poems there is considerable imaginative beauty, and much tender appreciation of what is lofty and pure in life."—*Imperial Review*.

"Mr. Gibbs's poems display exuberance of fancy, accompanied by constructive skill and ample command of language; and, amidst the great range of subject which they embrace, evince concentration and usefulness of purpose, as well as comprehensiveness of thought and illustration. 'The Story of a Life,' in particular, will be read with pleasure and profit; and several of its passages must retain a firm hold on the memory."—*Morning Post*.

RECENT OPINIONS.

"To such of our readers as are still unacquainted with these romances of real life, we recommend them heartily as pure and touching stories told with power, and in a form which is certain to find favour."—*People's Magazine*.

"In tracing the career of 'Harold Erle,' the tangled problem of our life is handled with a rare insight into human motives and their results, forming not unseldom the text for deep yet graceful evolution of philosophic and classical theories."—*Journal of Progress*.

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"Although a third edition, we must be allowed to express our admiration of 'The Story of a Life,' exhibiting as it does, deep touches of genius and poetic pathos."—*Exeter Post*.

"We might quote much more of equal beauty, but surely these three passages are sufficient to recommend the work to all lovers of true poetry."—*Dumfries Courier*.

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"The author writes with grace, freedom, and power, and possesses the gift of telling a simple yet intensely pathetic story, relieved by glimpses of a most beautiful home-life, in which the purest love shines out through the gloom. The picture is thoroughly English, and painted with the skill and delicacy of a true artist."—*Derby Mercury*.

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"Those who have read the 'Story of a Life' will be glad to meet old friends in 'Harold Erle.'"—*Dumfries Courier*.

"To rythmical measures, sometimes heroic, sometimes sweetly flowing, we have here two allied stories told with a broad, open, hearty spirit, most wholesome to read and to think about."—*Kent Herald*.

"It is with very great pleasure indeed that we commend these volumes to the attention of our readers. The 'Story of a Life' is told in easy musical rhythm, yet evincing depth of feeling, classic taste, and a true poetic nature."—*Fifehire Advertiser*.

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"Amongst the vast mass of poetry published, it is refreshing to take up books with the prestige of these. In the 'Story of a Life' the various members of a family group are admirably portrayed. The writer has evidently written *con amore*, and so interested himself with the loveable portraits he has drawn that he has been loth to lay down his pen, and has again and again resumed the thread of his history in two sequels; nay, he has done more, he has re-introduced them in a second poem entitled 'Harold Erle,' a tale of noble self-denial, distinguished by refined thought, conveyed in smooth and flowing rhythm."—*Essex Standard*.

"It is as a lyric poet that Mr. Gibbs excels. Since Hood wrote his inimitable satire, 'Miss Kilmansegg's Golden Leg,' we know of no poem which has appeared of equal force and fluency with 'Kling, Klang, and Klong, or Every Thing Wrong.' It satirizes folly as lightly and as keenly, displays a like command of rhyme and rhythm, and points the moral with as exciting a catastrophe. 'An Apology for Dulness in Prosperity' is another striking proof of minute observation, and the power to elicit great thoughts from common things; and the sarcasm of 'Modern Criticisms' is truly called for.

"In the loftier poem 'Kings,' the author rises with his subject;

he speaks strongly, for he feels strongly; his verses are sonorous as the surge of the sea, and read like the presage of an inspired prophet. We recognize in Mr. Gibbs a great poet, fit to rank with Browning and Swinburne in force and conception, and far above the latter in purity."—*Durham Chronicle*.

"The life sketched in this volume is of the higher sort; sorrow crystallising into human sympathy and then shining like Heaven's own light to make the sufferings of others less cold and dark. And the poet writes with a pen as skilful as his purpose is lofty, filling in his pictures with all the beautiful tints of earth and sky, gathering all real flowers, not scorning this, because too lowly, nor that because fashion has tabooed it. His tastes are catholic, as every true poet's should be, but he collects with a discrimination that comes from hard thought. It is said that those who give us *thoughts* are not much read in these days, but we presume that this is only a passing mood, for it is only the poetry which is derived from deep thought that men care to preserve. The story is an illustration of that quiet but noble heroism which lifts the eye to the stars when troubles come thickly round us; a series of pictures showing how real and true are the consolations of faith to the weary and baffled soul. We have many such stories, but few so simple, so natural, so life-like as this,—incorporated in it too are noble thoughts full of vigorous suggestion to the earnest mind, whilst there is no undervaluing of the pleasures of this life, but a large and wide-souled delight in all that is lovely, pure and good in it. It is a story which most people will like, even though its tendencies are to a high philosophy; for its pages teem with fine passages, smoothly and quietly spoken, sometimes having an influence like the silent light streaming over a sleeping world, sometimes like that of the more glorious sunshine, stimulating us to noble deeds."—*Border Advertiser*.

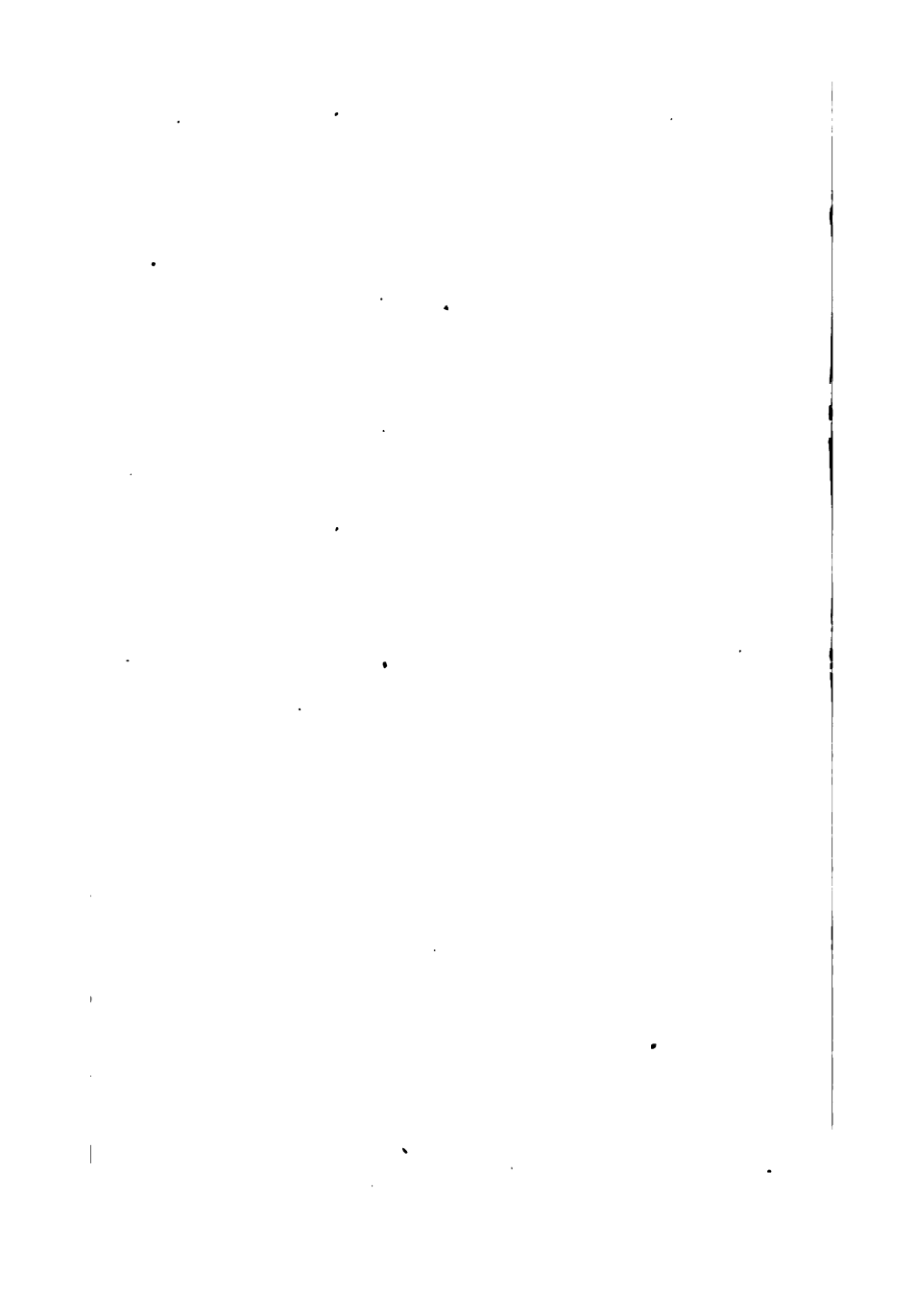
The foregoing opinions are permitted to be published simply as a species of cumulative evidence to this effect, that if the works named have given some gratification to men who by study, training and profession, are naturally hard to please, they may also afford pleasure to those who read to enjoy, rather than to criticise.

P R E F A C E

TO

THE "CRITICS" EDITION.

The generous sympathy with which this Story has been received by many of the highest literary authorities, and nearly the whole critical press, rendered it a point of honour with the Author to devote his first scanty leisure to a thorough revision of the earlier part of the Poem, which, from being absolutely his first essay, was terribly full of metrical blunders; these he has eliminated from the present volume with so unsparing a hand, that as a work of Art it is essentially a New Poem, and one upon which in its present form he ventures to rest his future reputation.





The Story of a Life.

BRIGHT, genial, prudent, gaily, kindly wise,
She moved amongst her children like a queen ;
Wisdom her crown, and for her sceptre, love.
So light and delicate her firm authority,
Her ' little people ' did not feel the power,
But yielded to it, as the ocean's waves
Yield to the gentle influence of the moon.
Instant, instinctive, glad, obedience
To that despotic will, which reigned supreme
Over their minds, by reigning in their hearts,
Saved their young souls from weary, toiling strife
With unchecked passions and uncurbed caprice.
Simply unconscious of all selfish wants
She ministered to theirs, with watchful care ;
And the full, free, developed impulses,
The cheery ringing laugh, and sunny eyes,

Told of that thrice blest thing, a happy home ;
Told of the mother's gentle skilful sway.
Was ever little empire so well ruled !
Were ever little subjects, all so gay !
Whether for study, play, meal, exercise,
Equally ready, joyous, thankful, docile ;
The spell of kindly ever-thoughtful love
Made sunshine in their hearts, and in its warmth,
Their opening minds put forth the fairy buds
Of childhood's promise of bright youthful flowers.

First, as the 'home-queen's' chief prime minister,
Stood, self-reliant, sunny Margaret ;
Clear, crisp, and bright as a September morn,
With fearless truthful eye and ready hand :
Quick to perceive, and imitating well
The mother's gentle firmness, quiet skill,
She learnt betimes to soothe and sway the wills
Of younger children, whilst herself a child.
Lithe as a panther, agile as a fawn,
Each power that time brought her, brought her joy.
In healthful exercise, however rough,
She yet held girlish grace ; to run, to leap,

To draw the winged arrow to the head,
Even to fence (this for her brother's sake,
Who else had wanted an antagonist),
To ride full speed over the springing turf,
Until her fair hair, loosened from its bands,
Fell in wild clusters, streaming in the wind—
Thus, with the glow of health upon her cheek,
The flash of young enjoyment in her eye,
Her merry laugh would ring thro' forest glades,
Joining the gladsome chorus of the birds—
These—were her chiefest, earliest delights.

But time brought higher powers, other joys ;
The dawning comprehension of the world,
With all its wondrous and harmonious laws,
By which things live, and move, and have their use,
The widening range of history and fact,
The glowing realm of fairy-land beyond
For ever broadening as she travelled on ;
Each new facility of pencilled grace,
Each growing mastery o'er Music's art,
Each new acquirement opened some new joy :
Knowledge to her, was pleasure, more than pow'r.

A touch of temper, like an early frost,
Would sometimes gather a thin film of ice,
O'er the still waters of her deep affections ;
But, in the sunshine of a kindly smile,
It broke away and melted into tears.

A lovely child of our fair mother Eve
Was gentle Eva, second in the home.
With promise of a rounded graceful form,
And a sweet face, where Nature's lavish gifts
Were heightened by the pure indwelling light
Of holy thoughts, and bright imaginings.
Quietly gay, and happiest amongst flowers,
Or with her books, she drank in with her life
All that was softest and most beautiful.
Fields, trees, and sparkling water, with a bridge,
Or distant abbey tower, and red-roofed farms
In middle distance, scattered here and there,
Shining up gaily thro' surrounding woods,
These, lighted by the level morning sun,
Were joys to her for ever, and a smile
Would mantle as she looked upon such scenes,
As tho' in these she saw bright Eden still.

This fine-wrought sense of beauty tuned her soul
Too high and painfully for common life ;
A boisterous noise jarred harshly on her ear,
An ugly sight struck pain into her eye ;
And, but for that calm quiet country home
Remote, secluded from the outer world,
She would have passed to that still better home,
Where such-like gentle spirits best can dwell ;
But in this atmosphere of love and joy,
Wherein her lot was cast, she too, was gay,
And merry quips of clear keen reasoning
Put with arch quaintness and with look demure,
Would ope the fountains of fresh sparkling mirth,
Whose glittering spray made music as it fell.

Swayed by the silken cord of loving words,
But hardened against sharp rebuke or pain,
Came restless, bold-eyed Harold, Mischief's chief ;
Eager for freedom, like a wild bird pent,
He chafed at study, and could little learn
From books, or by set ways, but yet no fool
Was like to prove, whilst so his eye and ear
Stood ever open to receive and store

Facts, objects, sayings, doings, in the world
Thro' which he walked, in quick observancy;
Dreamy and grave, with bursts of sudden mirth,
Loving and soft, with bursts of sudden wrath,
Gentle and tender in his childish ways
Tow'rd all things helpless, suffering, or weak,
Yet, like the inborn rebel that he was,
He oft defied a nursery in arms.

Sweet, docile Mabel, and imperious Maude,
That little queenly maiden, whose fair head,
Thrown back in proud resentment of a slight,
Showed such a noble face, and flashing eye,
That rebuke paused, before it fell on her;
And last the blue-eyed beauty, Lilian,
The little petted one, whose tiny feet
Would patter o'er the hall, like plashing rain,
Whose softly indistinct and half-formed words
Seemed to make imperfection beautiful;—
This—was the little empire, over which
Love ruled supreme, aided by skill and thought.

And he, the husband of so dear a wife,

The happy father of these bright young souls,
Stood like authority behind the throne,
Ready with aid and counsel for all need..

Strife had ne'er sundered them, not e'en in thought,—
No darkling doubt, no shadow of mistrust,
Had ever cast its gloom upon their path.
Grief they had had, sore grief, but shared and borne
With resignation as decreed by Him
To whom their spirits bowed in perfect trust,—
This but intensified their after-love,
And hallowed it with memories and hopes.

Oh happy home ! transient foretaste of heaven !
Why lurked the deadly serpent in that house ?
Whence came the canker in this golden fruit ?
Listen and heed it well, ye maidens fair,
Who stand in dangerous dear relationship
To stripling cousins growing into men.
Listen and heed it, ye who in the pride
Of early manhood's rash delicious love
Scoff at all forecast as an old man's fear :
'Twas intermarriage with 'too near' in blood,

That little-heeded source of wide-spread woe,
Unknown too often, until all too late !
That subtle canker whose pernicious germ
Eats to the core of human happiness,
Even whilst leaving bloom upon the fruit ;
That shadowy spectre in a thousand homes,
Laughed at by some with laughter born of fear,
Denied, defied or hid away in shame
By those who else could warn the unwary back.
Sometimes the baneful influence works at once ;
Afflicted children mock the mother's hope,
And blast the father's pride ; sometimes the curse
Lurks undeveloped till it is conveyed
A generation down—but ever there,
It follows like a bloodhound on the trail,
Sooner or later to tear down its prey.

Mark now the bitter punishment that fell
Upon the innocent from foregone wrong.

One day presiding at her children's meal
(Her loving custom from their earliest years)

She, who most cheerfully denied herself
That they might fare the better,—joying much
To mark their naive, outspoken, childish glee
At simple dainties or delicious fruits,—
She—thus by nature generous to a fault—
Now—with an angry movement sudden rose,
Demanding wildly, why such costly food
Should be prepared for children? the good nurse
Looked up amazed from where she sat to tend
The last fair rosebud ; as she looked, a thrill
Of nameless horror curdled thro' her blood,
To see that wild dilated eye and quivering lip,
The aimless gesture, and the staggering clutch
At something that was nothing but the air ;
For it shot thro' her like a lightning gleam,
'Great God of Heaven, mistress has gone mad!'

Yes! in that hour, amidst the loving cares
And quiet duties of her daily life
The hidden spectre raised its stealthy hand,
And laid its deadly weight upon her head.
Yes, stricken down for ever from her place,
Unthroned from that bright realm she ruled so well,

Her crown of reason shattered in the dust,
The sceptre of her love and power gone,—
This—was the dread, the bitter consequence
Of Heaven's laws ignored, or set at nought.
Oh! what a life of noblest uses lost !
What happy purposes scarce half achieved !
What urgent duties baffled, unfulfilled !
What wayward passions and unguided souls
Cast on life's waters by unskilful hands,
To spread wide circling sorrows thro' their worlds !

Margaret and Eva caught the sudden fear,
And shrunk with an instinctive dread from her
Whom they had almost worshipped ; in affright
The others opened wide their blue-eyed wonder,
And the unconscious Lilian laughed, then cried ;
That cry recalled—too late—the wandering blood,
Which rushing back to her dead heart once more,
Left her cheek ashen pale, her brain—a blank.

Ah ! how describe the hurrying to and fro,
The sickening terror and affrighted looks,

With which they bore her from that well-loved room
That she was never more henceforth to see,
Save with a vacant and unconscious eye !

Deep was the old physician's sympathy,
As with the prescience of his art, he saw
' No hope ' writ large, on that fair marble brow.
Deep, wide commiseration spread around ;
The servants gathered into little bands,
And spoke in whispers of old rumourings,
Long since forgotten, but afore-time rife,
Of the hereditary taint that hung
Upon the children of her father's house :—
How that her brother, in the mid career
Of wealth and power, had been stricken down
By a like fate, and how their master once
Had been forewarned, but laughed away the fear,
Saying like gallant wooer as he was,
' His bride could never be so mad as he
Was then, for love of her '—a merry jest,
To end in bitter earnest. Mark him now
Stunned, utterly bewildered by a grief
Too great to be believed in, or conceived

In all its depth at once ; but surging in
Slowly and heavily, like a black sea tide,
Until his soul seemed drowning in dark waves :
Will he now sink or swim ?—Oh ! few could tell ;
And pitying eyes looked wistfully, to see
That worn and haggard look grow dark and dead
In ever deepening sadness ; whilst the days
Brought him no sunshine, and the nights no rest.
Oh ! had he in those hours of wretchedness
Stood up in sternness, with the Stoic's pride,
A blow so heavy must have broke his heart ;
But in humility he bowed his head,
And that vast avalanche of grief passed down,
Leaving its streaks of snow amidst his hair,
And channelled furrows o'er his saddened brow.

Fair home deserted ! ruined by this blow,
Soon were thy joyous inmates all dispersed !
Silent and empty now thy pleasant rooms,
Once used for study, meal, and exercise ;
Tangled and grassy grew thy shady walks,
Which once re-echoed the swift bounding steps
And merry laughter of that happy time.

A restless Form, with vague uneasy eyes,
With two attendant women ever near,
Would wander aimlessly from room to room,
And sometimes sit with head on hand, and wail.
A bent grey-headed man, at dusk or dawn,
Would sometimes pace with dull and feeble gait
The sheltered terrace where few eyes could see ;—

And this—was all—of their once Paradise !

The children, truly, 'twas no place for them,
Some were sent off to formal stately schools,
Where like young eagles suddenly encaged,
They pined for freedom, languished in constraint ;
But yielding slowly to their atmosphere,
Acquired accomplishments, and lost their health ;
Others consigned to the much-troubled care
Of kindred, full of kindness in intent,
But lacking, as of course they ever must,
The mother's comprehension at a glance,
Of how to find the young soul's harmonies,
Jangled them out of tune by peevishness.

I follow not the fortunes of the rest,
But my sad chronicle is incomplete
Without the story of the gentle Eva.

Pass then with me the intervening years ;
Visit with me the village churchyard near,
And read the mother's name upon a tomb,
And give a sigh of sorrow, yet relief,
To think the Body gone to seek its Soul ;
And now come back with me to that old house,
Wherein some sparkle of its former light
Hath entered with the two slight graceful girls,
Just stooping down to kiss an old man's cheek.
A kindling glow hath come upon that cheek,
Unwonted brightness lightens up that eye,
As with a blessing trembling on his lips,
He bids his fair young daughters welcome home.

The influence of those few unsoftened years
Had hardened Marg'ret into self reliance,
Almost defiant in its strength of will:
Her character, still clear and crystalline,

Was cut into sharp angles, dangerous points ;
But Eva had not chafed against the wheel
Of grinding circumstance and formal power,
But yielding meekly to the waves of chance,
Ebbing and flowing o'er the sands of time,
Had but congealed and rounded to a pearl.

Too like a pearl indeed, in many ways !

The pearl of fragile beauty in the eyes
Of her old father, whose strong love and fear
Intensified each other, and so grew
Until he scarcely dared to look at her,
Lest that the look should bring the dreaded flush
Which, like red morning, heralds day of gloom ;
A pearl of loveliness so delicate,
That a rude hand, with rough unguarded touch,
Or the sharp acid in life's mingled cup,
Might crush—or utterly dissolve away ;—

This—was the tender, frail, young woodbine life,
That wound itself around the leafless stem
Of the scarred parent tree, and seemed to claim

That never thence should it be torn away ;
And sweetly for a time to that support
It clung, and grew, and put forth leaf and flower,
Giving its freshness to that withered heart.

Yes, ' for a time,' but always, in this world,
Doth circumstance still change and conquer time.

One bright September morning they rode forth,
(Margaret and Eva) thro' the forest glades,
Rejoicing in the cool and sparkling air,
The crisp elastic turf, the golden leaves,
That mingling with the still remaining green,
Made Autumn's colours rich and glorious.
Sudden—the crashing of a falling tree
Started their horses with as sudden fear,
And forward dashing, in their foolish fright,
Scared by each other's hoofs when once a'start,
They plunged thro' brake and briar, to a plain
Divided from the forest by a brook,
The which to leap, was Margaret's delight,
But Eva's dread ;—she then, Margaret,
With ease and wild enjoyment of the rush,

Rode her horse over ;—Eva followed close ;
But shaken and unnerved, when the rough shock
Had landed her across, she would have fall'n,
But that young Arnold of the Grange stood near,
And caught her in his strong arms ere she fell.

I will not say that he with dog and gun
Haunted the forest where they used to ride,
But 't must be owned, that not infrequently,
They met and passed, with neighbourly salute ;
It was not therefore merely a blind chance
Which drew him to the opening of the glade,
By sound of horses' hoofs, that Autumn morn ;
He caught her in his arms then, ere she fell ;
Life's burthen ne'er had seemed so rich, yet light
As that which now he bore, with gentlest heed,
And placed upon a soft and grassy bank.
The cheek that had been paled by fear, flushed forth
The silent thanks her lips refused to speak ;
And had he too irreverently watched,
He might have seen some tears that would well-up
At thought, that he must think her so ingrate.
Not long e'en this mute parley was vouchsafed,

For Margaret had wheeled her horse at speed
Round the wide plain, and so regained control ;
And then, with keen anxiety, rode back
To find her sister safe, from outward hurt ;
To Arnold greeting frank, and warmest thanks
She gave, and loosened thus his spell-bound speech,
Which now expressed in cheery pleasant voice,
With simple earnest unaffectedness,
His gladness that his aid had been of use
And claiming thence, the further privilege
To be fair Eva's needful escort home
Whither her palfrey, after running wild,
Had darted back to carry news of fear.
Most natural the father's gratitude
To him who had preserved his child from harm ;
And Arnold's manly bearing, noble mien,
Spontaneous cheerfulness and easy grace,
Combined with courteous respect for age
Won on the old man's nature from the first ;
Thence followed intercourse with such swift growth,
That ere it was suspected or observed
E'en by themselves, still less by any else,
Arnold and Eva had exchanged hearts.

With him,—a fearless, open, loyal man,
Keen to observe, and rapid to decide,
Not given to falter when his judgment led,
But by his compass 'Honour' steering straight
With singleness of purpose and of eye,—
To know he loved, and to avow it, came
In pauseless sequence, and to her he spoke
With earnest tenderness the words of truth.

Those 'words of truth,' so sweet to maiden's ear,
When they but seem the echoes of her heart,
Aroused to music by the voice of love ;
Those words of truth, which, like a magic glass,
Reflects herself transfigured by its charm
Into ethereal beauty, holy, pure,
Idealised as sometimes in bright dreams
She had conceived it possible to be.

Awhile she listened to those sweet strange sounds,
Which wrought so fair a spell upon her soul ;
Then looking down through the translucent depths
Of her pure-hearted consciousness she saw
His image, with her own, transfigured there,

Throned on the daïs of high mutual love ;—
Then, suffering one soft, kindling glance to meet
The earnest eyes that looked into her soul,—
The mystic vision crimsoned to a blush,
As with low voice she answered, ‘ I am thine.’

Oh ! then the sun burst forth with sudden sheen,
The air became an ocean of delight
Peopled with angels’ voices, and made rare
With heavenly odours, that to breathe was joy,
The dull prosaic earth whereon they walked
Seemed instinct with a new elastic life,
And bore them on its surface boundingly ;
The trees and flowers sprung into the air
Fountains of beauty, and around them, birds
Gathered, and shook down sparkling drops of sound ;
All colours, forms and sounds of outward things
Assumed a new and deep intensity,
Reflecting the bright hues within their souls,
And echoing the music in their hearts.

Too soon this glorious dream must have its end !
Too soon that fair Ideal pass away !

The sun seem blackness, and high noon dark night,
Music to discord change, rapture to grief,
All forms and colours hideous, hateful, wan !

Deep fell the shadows of the fatal past
Upon the old man's face, and deadlier within
Sunk the heart-sickness of prophetic woe,
When Arnold asked his sanction for their loves.

A wailing voice struck shrilly on his ear ;
Worn, wasted hands, wrung in deep agony,
Then lifted up with warning gesture, spread
A shroud-like scroll before his darkening gaze,
On which in lurid, fitful flame was writ
'Madness or death.'

Yet how refuse ! upon what plea, save that
Which to his o'er-wrought feeling seemed to cast
Reproach and shame upon the helpless dead,
Suspicion's baleful blight upon his child.

Blame not too harshly, if thus tortured, torn
By memory's sad prophecy of woe,

He answered coldly and evasively,
Nor told that tale of misery and shame.
Oh ! pity, whilst you blame, that he who once
Was clear as honour, open as the day,
Now sought with eager craft some pretext strong,
Whereon to base refusal of his suit.

Seldom indeed is search of this sort vain,
For Rumour, with its hundred whisperings,
Hath always something against all of us ;

A tale of wild adventure when abroad
In that far country where he won his wealth,
Set rolling wantonly, like ball of snow,
Had gathered in its course across the world
So many false extraneous increments,
So many sticks and straws, such black besmirch,
By passing o'er the dirty, unswept ways
Of men's uncleanly thoughts, as amply served
To give denial, colourable cause ;
But Arnold would not brook to be put by
With cold civilities and dubious words,
But pressing home for reasons tangible,

Found out the lie, and swore to trace it back
E'en to that country where he won his wealth,
And hale it forth, if need, with chastisement,
From the first utterer, and force him own,
'Fore God and all the world, 'It was a lie.'
Nor long with silken dalliance delayed,
Weighing the 'how' and 'when,' but with his oath
Still quivering on his lips, went home at once,
Dismissed his servants, sent away his stud,
And gave his steward charge what should be done,
Whiles he with fixed determination sped
Across the world to execute that oath.

Then pressing to his beating, aching heart,
The gentle Eva, whose hot tears fell fast,
He cheered her with that buoyant bravery,
Which hope of soon-cleared honour might inspire.
He told her truly, he was almost glad
That his true love was put to fullest proof;
And though the calumny had made him mad,
And though this parting seemed like bitter death,
Yet since 'needs must,' a fierce half-gladness came,
To think that thus he might win fonder love,—

Might show himself more worthy of such love :—
To traverse the broad world for her sweet sake,—
But for this parting,—were a welcome task :
Toil, pain, privation, danger, for her sake,
Would but intensify his love for her ;—
And so with such poor cheer as Sorrow finds,
To help us to endure what needs must be,
They parted sadly, and he went his way.

Again the woodbine clasped the scarrèd tree
More closely, fondly, with its tendrils torn,
But one by one its flowers faded, drooped,
And one by one its leaves fell shivering down,
And Heaven's lightning had not scarred that tree
So deeply as those withering tendrils did.
Arnold was storm-tossed on resistless seas,
But wilder, fiercer, more contentious storm
Raged in the seeming calm of that still home,
Wherein deep love strove ever with dread fear.
Oh ! ' mad for love of her,' he once had said,
In jesting carelessness of what might chance,
Now ' mad for love of her ' he deeply felt
In poignant fearfulness of what might chance.

Oft in the gloaming of the Summer's eve,
 When we are loth to think it can be dark,
 And yet the book or work is laid aside,
 Because good sooth we find it is not light,
 The girls would let their idle fingers stray
 O'er music's notes into the realms of song,
 And song, like angel by Cecilia charmed,
 Would stoop from heav'n down to join earth's choir.
 So thus, one eve, when grew the dusk so dark,
 That glowing cheek and tearful eye were hid,
 From the undying flame of Eva's faith,
 Came forth this little ray of Eva's love :—

‘ Return, return, thou noblest, dearest, best,
 Return, and bring my weary heart some rest ;
 Good angels guide thee through the desert waste,
 Speed thy good horse, and haste thee, hither, haste.

‘ Return, return,—I feel, I know thou wilt,
 Return, sun-cleared from that dark mist of guilt ;
 Good angels help thee swiftly to regain
 Thy name and honour freed from slander's stain.

‘ Return, return,—my spirit yearns for thine,
Return and tell me that thou still art mine ;
Good angels bear thee o’er wild ocean’ track,
And fan thy sails, to haste thee swiftly back.

‘ Return, return, obey my loving spell,
Return and see the face thou lovest well ;
Good angels guard thee from all woes and harms ;
Oh ! haste once more, to save me in thy arms.’

The song died out to a half smothered sob,
And then a silence fell on all the three,
Till Eva, pleading headache, shrank away
To seek the luxury of unseen tears.

What time that little earnest, loving lay
Was sung and pondered in the quiet home,
Arnold *was* hastening thitherward at speed.
The wild winds swept the ocean into waves
That lifted his good ship like cockle shell,
And cast her as in frolic at the moon ;—
Anon she dived, swift sliding headlong down
O’er the unstable glacier rollingly,

Until with plunging, quivering bows she finds
Again and yet again the deep sea's trough,
Whence leaping upward like a staunch good horse,
Breathed in the chase, but with the strength of
 ' blood '

Sustained and animate,—still bounded on ;—
And Arnold holding fast the foremost shroud,
Shouted with exultation at her speed :
' Oh winds ! ' he said, ' so ye but spend your wrath
To speed my way to England, blow your best !
Oh waves ! that hurl us onward in mad sport,
So ye but cast me on my native shore,
E'en like a spray of sea-weed, Hope will cling,
And Love will find me. Roar, ye winds !
Arise, ye waves ! I care not, I, how wild,
So ye but haste to fling me to her arms.'

So Eva's spell was working, and he came
One morning suddenly, at breakfast time,
The freshness of the sea-breeze in his hair,
The flash of hard won honour in his eye,
And the deep bronze of travel on his cheek ;
Whilst in his full-toned voice, a proud delight

Mingled its music with love's tenderness.
Sweet Eva in her pure white morning robe,
O'er which her golden tresses unconfined
Flowed forth like rays of sunshine over snow,
Seemed with her delicately radiant brow
Too fair and too ethereal for this world ;
Yet tho' an angel, she was woman, too,
And as she marked that noble stalwart frame,
Whose iron strength was suppld into steel,
By native grace and varied exercise,
And as she looked into that fine, frank face,
So well remembered and so doubly dear,
A gentle flush of admiration glowed
Upon her cheek, and lighted up her eyes,
Height'ning her beauty as she gazed at him.

Long time regarding her, like one entranced,
Absorbed and spell-bound by a lovely dream,
He sunned him in that love-light of her eyes ;
Then breaking with a sigh that silent joy
He turned to Margaret with gladsome words,
And placed a letter in the father's hand, •
(Before he claimed to grasp him with his own,)

Wherein with attestation clear, complete
The calumny was step by step renounced;—
Nor cared he now to pause upon the 'how'
The recantation was wrung forth from him
Who set the tale afloat, but urged at once,
With eager vehemence, his former suit.

The old man read the letter o'er and o'er,
But saw no word of all that it contained :
His eyes were fixed upon a fiery scroll,
His ears were listening to a phantom wail.
Awhile he mused, and then all absently
Folding the letter softly, laid it down,
And slowly rising, to the garden strayed.
Then Margaret rose too, and followed him ;
Thus walking to and fro, thinking aloud,
He told her all his dread, and all its cause :
But she, with her clear sharp incisiveness
Of self reliance, and half scorn of fear,
Helped by the power of youth's hopefulness,
Dispelled in part, e'en whilst she shared, his fear.
Then with long consultation, earnest, deep,
With many plans suggested and discussed,

She much relieved the heavy load of dread,
And soothed the gloomy forecasts of his soul :
For Margaret's sympathetic woman's heart
Saw in denial of that tender love,
More certain danger to the one they loved,
Than any evil that might come of it.
Therefore she bent the forces of her mind,
Using both reason and persuasion's powers
To frustrate greater evil by the less.
So thus at last he too, could not but own,
That their loved Eva, if denied in this,
The one absorbing passion of her soul,
Would fade away, and die beyond all aid ;
And that besides, a promise was implied
To Arnold, when his first suit was refused—
For reason of that wrong which now was right,—
Which could not now in honour be recalled.

The die was cast ; but first it was agreed
That Arnold should be told their history,
And if this wrought no fear upon his love,
But still he claimed the promise,—‘ it should be.’
These two returned then to the breakfast-room,

And Margaret on pretext slight, and gay,
Took Eva with her to the summer-house.

Then spake the old man sadly, tenderly,
As one whom deep affliction hath made meek,
' Sir, I have done you in some measure wrong ;
The slander you have been at so much pains
To trace out, contradict, and set at nought,
Weighed not so heavily against your suit
As a more deeply seated cause of fear
For yours, and my poor cherished Eva's fate ;'
Then, with a glistening eye and quivering lip,
And swelling veins, that stood out from his brow
Like cords o'erstrained by pressure from within,
He, from the buried memories of the past,
Called up the Mindless Body of the Dead,
To point with warning hand at destiny.

Arnold turned pale ;—danger and he were friends,
For they had met and fought with fierce delight,
On land and sea, by many a flood and field ;
But danger like to this he ne'er had known,
Subtle, invisible, intangible,

Not to be overcome by meeting it,
Not to be warded off by strictest heed,
Never to be escaped by fleeing it,
But always lurking, and for ever there,
Like deadly serpent in a tangled wood ;—

Whilst his soul measured swords with this strange
foe,

The other spake again still warningly ;
' Not lightly, rashly, as is youthful wont,
Nor jestingly encounter this dread thing,
Nor yet, self-dazzled by false chivalry,
Think ye can share, and so divide the fear ;
Others must share it also, and with these,
Again thou'lt have to take that larger share
Of bitter retribution, like to mine,
And this undying worm of self reproach.'

But Arnold answer'd hastily, ' Too late !
Our lives are now so intertwined by love,
That life is only possible with love,
Madness may come, or may not, if we wed,
To blast my future home, as it did thine ;

With open eyes I do accept the risk,—
With open hand I *dare* this fearful thing,—
Upon my head be all the self reproach ;—
For should we now retract the holy vows,
Tear up the contract written in our hearts,—
Madness to her, were then inevitable
And living death to me, for evermore.'

Then passed a grim smile, all devoid of joy,
Across the lips of him whose own rash words
Found echo in this wild impulsive pledge ;
And once again he heard that mourning wail,
And saw those wasted hands and lifted scroll.

There is a ' Time for all things,' and a time
Of joy and pleassance followed now upon
The dark forebodings of that fateful hour,
The charming cares and dear perplexities
Of coming wifhood, with its new delights
In things of elegance, and use, and taste
Aroused our gentle Eva's girlish pride,
And gave a sparkling lustre to her life.
Now that anxieties gave time and place

To lighter objects and material things,
She too could play the 'woman' to the life,
With all its piquant mimic coqueties ;
Whilst Margaret's keen, reckless, flashing wit,
Arnold's gay, buoyant humour, quaint and wild,
And the loved father's all exhaustless store
Of varied knowledge culled from men and books,
Played round her head, and lighted up her path.

The days were spent in easy journeyings
Tow'rd anywhere that inclination led ;
Sometimes devoted to the pleasant task
Of new arrangements for their future home ;
More oft to pilgrimage to some near shrine
Which art or nature richly had adorned—
A treasury of pictures at some hall,
Or lordly mansion in the vicinage,
A lovely view of lake and glen and sea
From vantage ground of craggy mountain-top ;
The morning ride thro' the wild forest glades,
With spirit-stirring gallop o'er the plains,
The noonday novel, music, song, or poem,
Evening's delicious coolness on the lake,—

Each ministered to them supreme delight,
For each was now intensified by love.

Thus the young hearts grew blithe and gay again,
For youth and manhood hold not sorrow long,
Their sun rides the meridian, and dispels
The mists of childhood and the clouds of age.
So Gaiety lit up the 'Home' once more,
Waking long silent Laughter from his sleep.

Then—came at last that all momentous day,
When Love upon the altar lays his Wreath,
And it becomes a Crown.

The crown of manhood's honourable toil,—
The crown of woman's dignity and worth,—
The crown accepted, granted, ratified
By solemn promises and sacred oaths.

Ah! woe's the while, that this bright diadem
Should be disgraced so often and so soon!
Sullied by passion, vice, and deadly sin,
Or filled by weak caprices, with sharp thorns,

That sting its wearers to divorce or death.
Not this the fear that drew its shadowy cloud
Athwart the sunshine of that happy day :
None ever spoke those promises and vows
With truer lips, or more unsullied souls.

His—was the strong love of an ardent heart,
Held under strict and masterful command—
Love so entwined with high-bred chivalry,
So broadly based on honour and firm truth,
That on it Hope might build her pyramid,
High towering heavenward, but all unshaken,
Until the orb of life, whereon it stood,
Should break and fall asunder at death's touch.

Hers—was a love unbounded, measureless ;
Pure as an angel's, trustful as a child's,
Yet like a woman's, ardent, deep and full
'Twas the warm heart-glow rising into flame,
And circling like a halo round her head.

Their purpose held to travel far and wide,

Thro' their own country first in quietude,
Unhurried by the times of whirling trains
Or tides of restless seas.—A staunch, fleet pair
Of 'thorough-breds,' a phaeton well contrived
For lightness, ease, and comfort, Arnold chose ;
And forth with joyous sense of freest life
They took their errant and delightful course
Thro' lovely England's loveliest scenery.

How few in this mad age of feverish haste
Know aught of their own land ; save that it hath
A score or two of central salient points,
Or bustling mimic ' Londons ' on the sea,
To which, and *from* which, they rush to and fro,
Half suffocate with smoke, foul smells, and dust,
Half stunned with hideous, harsh, incessant clank ;
Whisked past fair valleys, towns, and villages,
Hurled into sulphurous darkness, with wild yells
Of the ear-splitting whistle's sudden scream,
Then hustled out at the drear journey's end,
Shaken in body, feverish in mind,
Into a striving, struggling, seething mob
Of anxious, selfish, motley inhumanity.

Contrast this so called 'pleasure-seeking trip'
With the unhurried after-breakfast stroll,
The morning drive across the breezy hills,
Thro' undulating vales and shady woods,
By winding lanes whose every gentle turn
Changes the landscape with a shifting scene ;
Whilst varied odours float upon the air
From hawthorn hedge, field-blossom, or fresh hay ;
No harsher noises than the light swift wheels,
The ringing harness, and the horses' hoofs,
Which all combined, drown not the lark's sweet song,
Nor scare the timid linnet from her bush.

Thus passed their mornings ; at the mid-day halt,
In quiet village or old country town,
They rested at the ancient hostel, where
An antique welcome ever seemed to wait ;
Then wandered forth, to visit aught of note
In the surrounding or near neighbourhood :
Sometimes a broken legendary bridge,
Whereon contending foes in feudal times
Had struggled with chivalric bravery ;
Historic market-cross, or street, or house,

Each with wild stories of its own to tell ;
Sometimes the quiet churchyard, where reposed
The actors of the stories peacefully,
Whiles the tall spire, high rising midst the graves,
Stood by, still pointing upward to the skies,
Like as it were God's finger-post tow'rd heaven ;
Sometimes a ruined abbey in the dell
Where flowed the useful river, to supply
Its needful adjunct unto godliness,
And thick-swathed grass, and forward corn, told well
That carnal comforts were not overlooked
By the shrewd monks who here possessed the land :
Or shattered castle in its place of power,
Standing alone upon high vantage ground,
With drawbridge covered over with thick moss,
Porteullis rusted fast in long disuse,
And empty moat, now grass-grown, safe and smooth,
Up which clomb urchins in their idle play :
Castle or abbey, ruined hall or tower,
Each had some gateway or deep windowed arch,
Thro' which Imagination could look back
Upon the dreamy legends of the past.

Under such shadows passed the hotter hours,
And never time seemed long or wearisome ;
Whiles he recorded what they did or thought
In careless verse, or grave or gay by turns,
She with her skilful pencil, bore away
The outward semblances of what they saw.
Then, as the cooler evening time approached,
Again they took their ever onward way,
Seaward perchance ; to some gay watering-place,
Where for a while they joined the giddy round
Of light laborious gaiety, and gained
Fresh zest for that calm life they loved so well :
Or elsewise to the stately county town,
Arriving at the pleasant sunset hour,
When the cathedral's massive towers stood out
Against the darkening blue in soft relief ;
Whilst the loud-pealing solemn organ-tones
Swelled grandly forth to bid the sun farewell,
Bearing up heav'nward on their clouds of sound
The silvery sweetness of the choral voices.

Thus pleasantly the swift weeks glided by,
Till Arnold, watching with delight the growth

Of powers to endure increased fatigue,
Ventured, in hope yet more to aid that growth,
To take a wider range of wandering.
Regretfully, as parting with old friends,
They sent tow'rds home their gallant 'petted' pair,
And traversed the Welsh mountains to the Lakes ;
Then through the Northern cities they passed on
To Highland castles, through grand glens and lochs,
And revelled long in Nature's wildness there ;
Then crossed the seas to Wicklow's lovely scenes,
And wandered wide midst Connemara's glooms.
Southward again they took their errant course,
O'er Galway's waters, past the cliffs of Clare,
Glengariff's splendid coast-line and grand bay ;
By calm Killarney's lakes they stayed awhile
To wake the echoes from the fairy hills,
And watch the moonlight shimmering through the
mists ;
Thence like young eagles taking wider sweeps,
As the used wings grew stronger for the flight,
They circled France and Alpine Switzerland ;
Descending next on the fair classic land
Of glorious Italia, they explored

Each country in its turn with fresh delight ;
Then homeward gliding down the pleasant Rhine,,
To Belgium's battle-fields, and quaint old towns,
Arnold at length perceived with boundless joy
The lovely bloom of gladsome merry health
Glow on her cheek and sparkle in her eye.

After long travel who can draw near home
Without a thrill of pleasurable pride ?
Home ! What a magic is there in that word.
Picture the little ship-boy far at sea
Hauling, with bleeding fingers, frozen ropes,
Or clinging to the topmast's slippery height,
Straining his young eyes till they ache with pain
To pierce the dark, where danger else might lurk ;—
Sees he not then the sunny summer fields,
Or happy fireside circle of his home ;
And in bright hope to see his father's smile,
To hear his mother's gentle loving words
To feel his sister's kisses once again,
The little hero nerves him for fresh strife
With hurtling waters and wild roaring winds.
Or mark the bold, self-exiled pioneer,

Struggling with Nature in her solitudes,
Forcing the prairies to yield up their spoils,
Hewing down forests to build up new towns,
Or washing sands on some wild river bank,
Playing that fierce first game of life 'gainst gold,
How often, with the evening's lonely pipe,
His thought sees pictured in the curling smoke,
His childhood's home, which distance makes more
dear ;

Aye, and full often,—till the summons comes
To that last home where all may meet again,—
The emigrant will never speak or think
Of going back,—but simply going home.
Scarcely less dear the home of a young bride,
Her first of 'very own,' where ample wealth,
Guided by loving studies of her choice,
Has lavished all its powers on such things
As best may charm her still half-girlish taste.
To such a home ; led back with pride and joy
By a loved husband worthy of her love,
Eva returned with innocent delight
In all the fair adornments, where each wish
Had been divined, and there stood all fulfilled ;

She standing in the midst, their fair young queen,
Half conscious that in her loved Arnold's eyes
She was herself, her home's chief ornament.

But higher cares than things inanimate,
However beautiful, now claimed his heed.
It was his aim so to surround her path
With gaily-wise and wisely-witty friends,
That youthful impulse, having ample play,
Unchecked by sad sententious gravity,
Should draw to wisdom, not be crushed by it.
He did not choose associates for their wealth,
Nor (like his horses) for their pedigree ;
If rich, they still had less of wealth than worth,
If high bred, they were nobler than their birth.
Therefore around their board no stiff constraint
Froze into scornful silence ill-matched guests,
But gaiety and wit and wisdom met,
Like flint and steel and tinder of old use ;
These first to strike the spark, and *that* to hold
The fire so stricken till it gave good light ;
And Arnold, like a woodman in the ' bush,'
Could blow the tiny spark and set the match,

And light the drywood to a genial blaze,
Until it crackled into flashing mirth.

Eva, with gentle grace and native ease,
And quick appreciative taste, acquired
The happy art of caring for her guests,
Without betraying that it was a care,
Steering her graceful course with silken sails,
Betwixt the hard, cold, smooth, forbidding rock
Of modern dull, inane indifference,
And the vexed, restless and disturbing whirl
Of antique fussy hospitality.

Weeks, months, and years, each filled with circum-
stance

Of happiest influence, went brightly by.
Time's action upon full congenial souls
But mellows the rich wine of younger love
Into a finer brilliance, soft and clear ;
Events, like rough winds, shake down weakling fruits,
But give a stronger growth unto the strong ;
Experience brought fresh mutual confidence,
And hence, affection, deepened by respect,

Drew them still closer and with stronger ties.
There had been one ungratified desire,
But even this was now at length fulfilled;—
Past were those dreadful hours of anxious hope,
Where on the fateful hazard, life seems staked,
To lose itself, or win another life;
Past were those poignant and sharp agonies,—
Those gates of pain thro' which mortality
Enters this world to take its share in turn :
For Eva had become the happy source
Of that mysterious joy, a living soul.

But now drew near the end—which shall be told
Briefly—for sorrow ever should be brief—
Wherein the dread inevitable Past
Threw off the fair disguises it had worn.

This cup of happiness, now filled so full,
And lifted up for loving lips to drink,
Was all too frail to bear its weight of joy,
And like Venetian goblet, sensitive,
When touched by any poison in the draught,
Fell shivering down, and scattered all the wine.

All had gone happily—the first few days
Brought each its full restorative of rest ;
Then slowly, spite of ever watchful care,
She sank, and sank, and faded, hour by hour ;
No skill, no care, no mortal means availed,
To stay those failing powers from their fall.
The good nurse watched her with a mother's care,
Skilful physicians stood around her couch,
And held deep consultations on her state.
Her husband would have died rejoicingly,—
Her father would have lived his life again,
To save that loved one from her coming doom ;—
But Destiny admits no hostages,
What *is* to be, *must* be, for each alone.

The sad physicians echoed the dread words
Seen long ago on that prophetic scroll,
' If the frail body lives, the mind must fail.'
' Madness or death,'—then once again the wail,
And worn and wasted hands wrung in wild grief,
Came back—the fearful vision now made real.

Arnold watched by her night and day, until

He grew so wildly haggard and distraught,
That Margaret with a kind insistence barred
The chamber door against him for a space.
Thus banished, he with hasty dreamy step
Turned to her boudoir, where he might still hear,
Or think he heard her, if she wailed or moaned.
He paced the room in restless agony
Of wild anxiety, that tore all thought
To shreds and fragments,—hurrying to and fro
With aimless purpose—then in haste a step,
And a pale face with white lips at the door—
‘Sir ! sir ! my lady’s dying, she would see you.’
Unknowing how, he knelt beside her couch ;
Pale, faint, but glowing with indwelling light,
She lay in feeblest slumber, but awaked
And turned upon him wistful dove-like eyes
With one last, long, heart-desolating look
Wherein the yearnings of the wifely love
Blazed forth one instant radiant and full,
Then slowly paled its weaker frailer fires
Before the holy bright unearthly beam
Which wrapt her soul as with a heavenly robe.

It was the Woman,—struggling with the Angel,
The mortal,—with immortal love contending,—
Then all was over ! thus—the struggle past—
She moved her lips to say the last farewell,
And as he bent to touch them with his own,
Upon the wings of that last loving kiss
Her gentle spirit passed away to heaven.

* * * * *

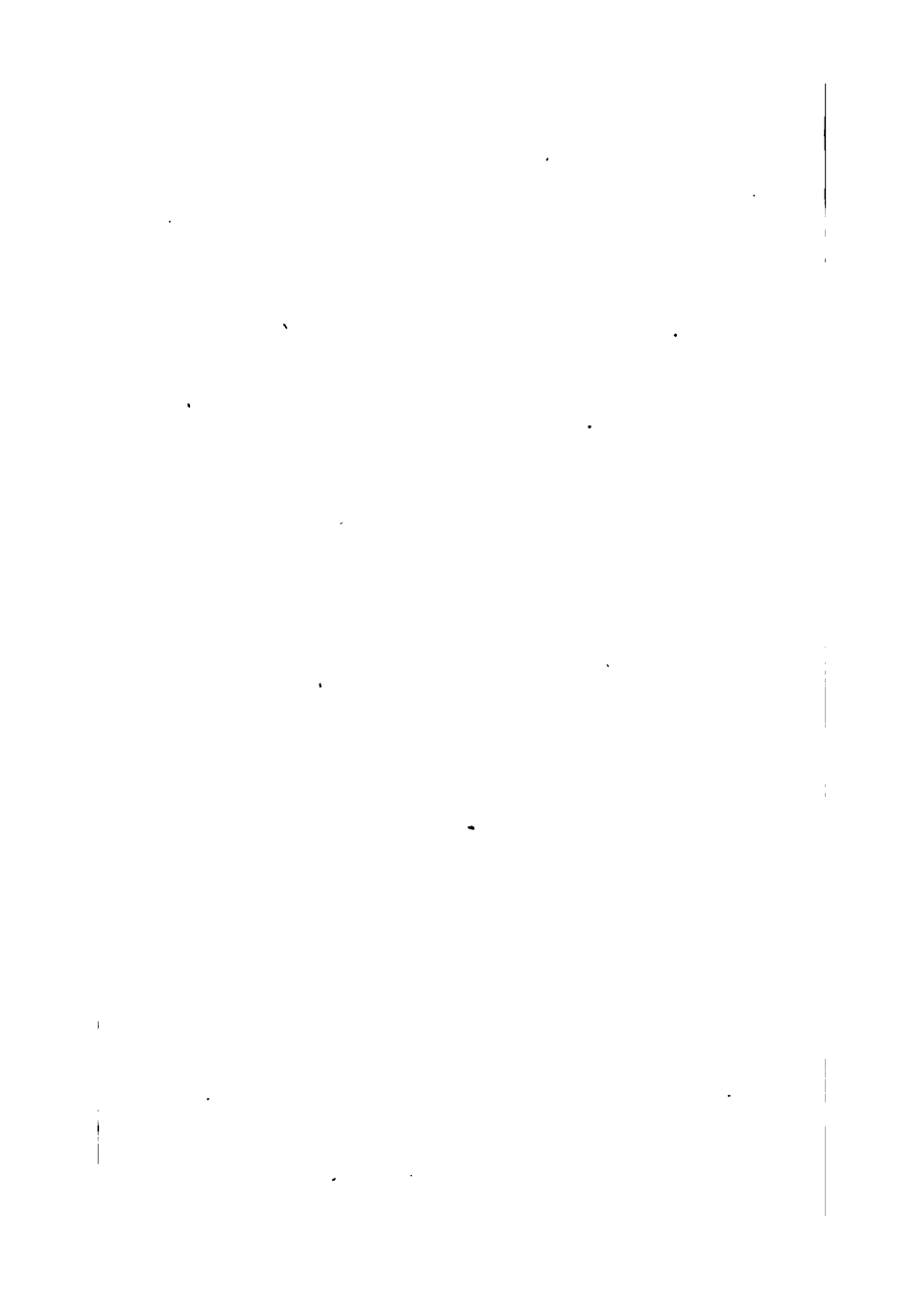
Who, who that hath not sunk in sorrow's depths,
Can measure, fathom, or but half conceive
The dark abysses and the formless void,
Peopled by phantasms of a broken heart !
Wherein dull, solemn, black mechanical
Things, that seem men and women, come and go,
Bringing distasteful food and sick'ning wine,
Arranging pompous mockeries of grief,
And uttering sounds that have no sense in them ;
Outer condolence, ceremonial words,
Spoke to the ear, but heard as tho' far off.

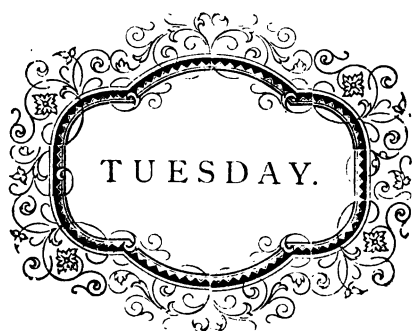
Thus came the day of dismal pageantry,
The bitter climax of the horrid dream,

And he alone, sole mourner midst the crowd
Of trained habitual solemnities,
Passed thro' it vacantly as still in dream.
But when night came which should bring sorrow rest,
And all the doings of the day were done,
He woke to the acute reality
Of what had been,—and what henceforth must be.

Now was his hour of deepest agony,
And fiends fought wildly to possess his soul.
Athwart his cold and solitary bed
He flung himself, and sobbed out in fierce grief
Abrupt and passionate remonstrances
Against high Heaven's unreversed decree.
But as the hours of night went trailing by,
Silent as death, and black as his despair,
They dropt an aching calmness from their wings
Which in slight measure lulled the first fierce storm;
Beneath their influence,—slowly to his knees,
He drooped and prayed—swooned, woke and prayed
again,
Less incoherently—until the chill

Of coming morning, and his empty couch
Went shivering like ice splinters thro' his heart;
Then rising with a shudder, he drew back
The heavy curtains that shut out all light ;—
The moon was hidden by a thick black cloud,
But the small star that follows on her track
Shone brightly forth, and seemed thro' his tears
To form a starry rainbow in his sight :
Thence came remembrance of a little star
Left moonless and deserted in his home ;
And looking o'er the level waste he saw
The first faint streak of what perchance was dawn.





First Sequel to the Story of a Life.

BRAVE hearts !

That ever, with undaunted hope and faith,
Accept with modest courage all life's woes,
Pains, griefs, bereavements, injuries, and wrongs,
As natural penalties that all must pay
For their existence here upon this world ;
The bitter punishment of foregone sin,
The needful discipline for future heaven.

Brave hearts !

That sit not always mourning on the shore,
With streaming eyes and idly claspèd hands,
But like the storm-roused mariners go forth,
And steer their life-boats through the blinding spray,
With cheerful self-devotion to the wrecks,
To save or succour those who else would sink.

Brave hearts !

That from the scattered spars of shipwrecked love
Build a firm raft to bear them thro' the surf,
And gathering heedfully what may be saved
Of sail or compass to assist their need,
Wait for the heavy clouds to break away,
Then with unwavering gaze upon the stars
Commit themselves to ocean and to God.

Whilst Margaret's tears for Eva still fell fast
In secret, thro' long watches of the night,—
Altho' by day she bore a steady front,
That so she might help others to sustain
With outward calmness this great suffering ;—
Whilst Arnold, scarce recovered from his dream,
Went thro' his worldly duties heavily,
As half unconscious of their aim or end,—
The grief-worn father, overborne and crushed
By this foreseen, yet not less startling woe,
Broke down in health and spirit both at once,
And sinking wailed his weary life away.
'Weary—ah ! weary,' he would often say,

'I wait God's pleasure, but I fain would die,
 I am so old, so old, I have outlived
 My use and purpose in this restless world.
 The outlets by which man holds free cōnverse
 With outward things of substance, sense, and thought,
 Are closing in upon me day by day:
 Sight, hearing, touch, and taste, are well-nigh gone,
 Reflection paineth, memory faileth me.
 I've lived my life according to my light,
 Thro' many bitter trials and deep woes.
 Since that one fatal error of my life,
 I've striven to do right for each and all,
 And never proudly held or wealth or power,
 Excepting as God's steward, so to use
 His gifts for others, rather than myself;
 Therefore, in Him I trust, and fear not death,—
 Christ told us He is good and loveth all,
 And I have found it true, even in grief;
 But now my strength is spent, I cannot strive
 With our strange foe, but hail him as a friend.
 I wait God's pleasure, but I humbly pray
 That it may please Him, soon to take me hence:
 Ask me no more to live, I fain would die.'

Affection could not help but disobey,—
 Using its gentlest art and kindest care
 To cheer and cherish the decaying frame,
 And hold the spirit from its wished-for flight.
 But death defies all power of mortal love
 To stay his progress when his hour hath come.

Harold, recalled from college, home in haste,
 Mabel and Maude from school, came but in time
 To gather round the couch where life's last pangs
 (Ah! who can tell how sharp) were nobly borne
 With Christian fortitude and dauntless soul
 By him whom they all loved so tenderly.

* * * *

Twice stricken in one week is hard to bear!
 Again to stand upon the dark grave's edge
 So soon, is terrible to bravest hearts!
 Yet thro' the subtle workings of the soul,
 There came o'er Arnold something like a calm,
 With mournful thought, that soon that dark grave's edge
 Must crumble 'neath his feet, and, in deep peace,
 He too should rest in hope with those who sleep.
 This second death so quickly following

Gave him new insight into man's slight hold
On life, and the involuntary question came,
Who next will die? perchance, perchance myself.

Not unto youth, nor manhood in its prime,
Is prayer for death befitting or allowed ;
While hand or head or heart can aught achieve
For other's welfare or God's purposes,
Those powers belong to Him, and must be used
In this life earnestly, till we go hence.
So Arnold turned away from that dark grave,
And sought for those who, fatherless and lone,
Had pressing need of counsel, guidance, aid.

Like to a shipwrecked crew adrift in boats,
When the good ship that hitherto hath been
Their home, their safety, founders suddenly,
And reeling in the whirlpools of the sea,
Plungeth head downward and is seen no more ;
So, with a dizzy sickness and vague fear,
An aching utter void scarce understood,
Save as a sense of awful loneliness,
O'erwhelmed in tears sate Mabel and fair Maude.

True-hearted Margaret, softened and subdued,
Attuned by grief to loving sympathy,
Soothed them with consolations such as she
Had prayed for fervently, and so received.
But Harold stood aloof in bitterness,
With sullen moodiness upon his brow,
And cynical half-angers on his lips :
To him then Arnold, understanding well
The different forms and workings sorrow takes,
Ere it can mellow and refine the hearts,
Or curb the unbridled wills of younger men,
Addressed his chiefest care and highest skill,
(Regardless of th' abrupt offensive mood,)
To break away this black rebellious grief.
' Oh brother in deep sorrow, hear my words ;
More have I suffered, longer lived, than you ;
Believe me, Harold, these things are not sent
To anger us and turn our blood to gall,
But in these darkened hours of our lives
There still is light to guide us on our way ;
God's doings are not harsh, inscrutable,
Like blind decrees of an avenging fate,
To be endured in sullen bitterness,

Or wailed about from thenceforth evermore,
But dimly they disclose the purposes
Of all things that afflict our mortal state.
Strive then, to see, that death but breaks the chains
Of love on earth, to join them all in one
And draw us heavenward—that pain is sent
To prune down our luxuriant love of life,
And wean us from mere worldly vanities,
To train us early to endure its pangs
With courage, calmness, and a patient grace.
Griefs, injuries, and wrongs, bewildering cares,
Hurrying perplexities, disappointments, slights,
With all the minor woes whose insect stings
So mar our joys and interrupt our works,—
These, also, each and all in their degree
Work thro' "experience, patience, faith thro' hope." '

But Harold bit his lips and turned away,
And with a scowl low-muttering left the room.

No words of counsel bear immediate fruit,
The seed must take its time to germinate,
And strike out tiny rootlets of its own,

Which taking gradual hold upon the soul,
If there be soil enough to nourish them,
Will in due time and season, by God's grace,
When warmed by love and watered with our tears,
Put forth the budding promise of new life.
So Arnold waited patiently aloof,
Nor sought to press more counsels, nor to mar
The due effect of those few simple words,
Spoken from heart to heart, by other words
Of meanings similar, but lesser force :
Then after many days they worked their work
On Harold's noble nature, and with frank
And manly heartiness, he took his part
Once more in all the duties of the home ;
And these were manifold and difficult,
For losses on affliction followed close.

'Twas one of those drear periodic times,
When schemers, having blown a vast balloon,
And gilded it all over with gold leaf,
And placed it in prosperity's full glare,
To dazzle the weak eyes of country squires,
Impoverished widows, or poor maiden aunts,—

Blow just a puff too much, and with collapse,
Sudden and ruinous to those whose means
And scanty fortunes have but gone to make
The fair outside of fraudulent hollowness,
The bright false bubble bursts, and disappears.

Thus the good father's seeming-ample store
Of fair provision for his children's welfare,
Fell all to pieces like a skeleton,
When suddenly brought up from antique vault
Into the light and presence of the day.
No selfish greed of gain had drawn him in
To those mad whirlpools where so many drown,
But under what he held most safe advice
Of his most honest-seeming friend, he made
These 'safe' investments for his children's sake.

So these who had been nursed in plenty's lap,
And lived surrounded with the thousand things
Of tasteful beauty, elegant refinement,
That seem as needful as the atmosphere,
And are (till gone) well-nigh as unregarded,—
These, would have sunk in lowest penury,

If Arnold had not lived to give them aid.
With thoughtful, kind, instinctive delicacy
He much concealed their fortune's total wreck,
And ere that wretched day when callous law
Laid its unsparing hands upon the prize
Of the time-hallowed treasures of their house,
He on pretext of needing Margaret
To take a fuller charge of Eva's child,
Withdrew them to his house, henceforth their home,
And purchased for them their small household gods,
To give their new home, likeness to the old.

From Harold nought of this could be concealed,
So Arnold told him all without disguise,
But with such hearty bright encouragement
As cheered the lad to take it bravely too.
He told him of his own experiences,
Of Fortune's frequent freaks and ups and downs,
And 'how to men it could not matter much,
Whilst they had health and strength and energy,
What buffets of this sort they met withal :'
Then with a firm insistence claimed a right,
As elder brother, to provide his needs

For the remainder of his college life ;
 Which Harold might repay with usury
 (If it so pleased him) in the years to come,
 When he had won his place in wealth and fame.
 Thus, self-elected guardian, Arnold felt
 A glow of pleasure mingling with his pain,
 And a returning thankfulness to God
 That He had spared his life to be of use.

For nothing in this world can so assuage
 The personal anguish of an aching heart,
 As to go forth forgetful of itself
 Using its sorrow to give others joy
 By doing noble, brave, or generous deeds :
 And who shall doubt that the sweet reflex light,
 Like the soft brilliance of the winter moon,
 Shall shine in ample measure back again
 Upon the hitherto beclouded heart,
 Giving a silvery radiance to its tears,
 Lightening its darkness with a mystic glory !

Such was the gentle influence that evolved,
 More and more often as the years went by,

Something of old but chastened cheerfulness
To play upon the surface of his life ;
And tho' it could not melt the ice that clung
Around his inner nature and benumbed
Those inlets to the soul by which in youth
We drink in joys from all external things,
Yet, it was brightness, and made home seem gay.

The girls would frolic round him like young fawns,
And for proud Maude he oft would play the boy,
Trying to tease her into mimic rages,
That he might mark the queenly dignity
Of archèd neck, proud step, and flashing eye,
Dilated nostril, and uplifted arm.
Mabel clung to him with fond childish love,
And often raised a mist before his eyes
By some unconscious gesture, tone, or look,
That seemed to bring his Eva from the grave.
Harold's affection, deepened by respect,
Grew into such full influence o'er his mind,
That it preserved him thro' much tempted-youth
From all base vices, low or grovelling tastes.
If, that he fell sometimes in folly's ways,

Thro' ill example or wild heedlessness,
 The flash of 'What would Arnold think of me?'
 Lighted him back to manly purity.
 Thus with a mind and body undebauched,
 Trained by sharp study, thought, and exercise,
 He was well forward in the race of life,
 And followed hard those mysteries of law
 Which often, like Aladdin's fabled lamp,
 Open the 'Sesame' to wealth and rank.

Meantime devoted Margaret, with strong will,
 Furth'ring all Arnold's plans, bent her clear mind
 To educate for highest purposes
 The latent powers of the younger girls;
 That so they might, each in some special art,
 Find such absorption of the heart and brain
 As to preserve them from that lurking risk
 And hidden danger, dread insanity;
 And help them to endure, perhaps to choose,
 A life unmated, save to their high art.

The fairy Lilian, like a rosebud plucked
 By the same hand that gathereth the rose,

Had faded with its mother long ago,
Ere that its beauty had been shown in flower :
But Eva's child, the plaything of the house,
The petted, spoiled (if such things can be spoiled),
Seemed like the little Lilian come again.
Deep was the strong man's yearning tow'rd his child,
And strange the thrill sent thro' her tiny hands
When clasped around his sunburnt brawny neck,
Or patting with their velvet touch his cheek,
Or playing wantonly with beard and hair.
This chord of sympathy, so subtly fine,
Lesser to sight than spider's finest thread,
More strongly bound the strong man to the earth
Than fabled chain that held Prometheus down.

These then were saved from out that first sad wreck ;
And for the raft they sailed in, 'twas a home
Quiet and unpretentious, far aloof
From all the wild excitement miscalled life :
Placed on a hill-top where the gentle South
Had ample access for her soothing breezes,
But sheltered from all keen or boisterous winds
By belts of woods, thro' which wound shady walks

Beneath tall avenues of tapering limes,
Whose branches in symmetric bendings formed
High Gothic arches,—casting flecks of shade
From every leaf thickly as flakes of snow
Upon the moss-bound stones of ancient paths.
Within the wooded belts and round the house,
The lawns and pleasure-gardens nestled close
Up to the very windows, out of which
One step transferred you to the velvet sward.
No formal geometric lines distressed
The eyes that love the soft and flowing curves
Which blend with easy grace, nature with art ;
But here and there an ivy-covered urn,
Or pillar on a massive pedestal
Told of men's hands, once busy, now at rest.
Sometimes a range of grey stone balustrade,
Sometimes a crescent of green leafy arches,
Parted the gardens to their several uses,
For flowers, thickets, archery, or bowls.
Southward and eastward the pleased eye could range
Over the spreading lawns adown broad glades,
Across a wide extent of pasture land,
On to a dreamy forest, where the trees,

Bathed in the morning dews, awoke refreshed,
Slept thro' the hot noon's gleaming, quivering haze,
Then caught the last rays of the setting sun,
And holding them transfused in glowing mist,
Vanished away by mellow distance blended
Into ideal softly falling night :
Westward and north a sheltered terrace walk,
Far from the house, approached by avenues,
Opened a varied scene of deep-down vale
(Thro' which the glistening river took its way),
And slowly undulating country sides
Dotted with homesteads, woodlands, villages ;
Then in mid distance, the old market town
Seemed clustering round the grey cathedral spire ;
While in the far horizon shone the sea.

These were the fair surroundings of the home ;
The house itself capacious, cool, and light,
With quaint suggestions of a bygone age
In its wide halls and rambling corridors,
Its ' ups ' and ' downs ' and droll intricacies,
Wherein strange guests would often lose themselves,
Had not been modernised, except in such

Appliances for health and cheerfulness,
As saved its inmates from dull Winter's chills
And made it for all seasons comfortable.
It had the special charm of cheerfulness;
Margaret's fine tact and skilful power of rule
Much soothed and checked domestic fractiousness
And banished negligence, confusion, hurry;
Hence days and evenings went brightly by,
And soon the younger hearts threw off their care.
Full occupation aided much in this;
The morning study, and the noontide ride
Thro' the cool forest to the open chase,
Then home with glowing cheeks to dress and lunch,
And after, drive to 'shoppings' in the town
Or for a sketching ramble on the beach.
At eventide, with spirits gay and fresh,
They turned with fullest relish, eager zest,
Each to their study in their several arts:
Mabel chose music, painting fell to Maude,
Whilst Margaret and Arnold read to them,
To fill their minds with high poetic thought,
From noble works of these and former days.
Harold would often hurry down from town,

Bringing some pleasant, cheery, valued friends,
And then 'twas made a little festival ;
Some two or three near-neighbouring families,
The Dean and his good sister would drive up,
And all with happy unforced gaiety
Enjoy a quiet dinner and a chat,
Whilst the young folk would sing, or read a play,
Or end the evening with a carpet dance.
And Arnold was no death's head at a feast,
Nor wore his sorrow ever on his sleeve,
But strove his best, and sometimes with success,
To catch the sweet infectious gaiety,
And join the sparkling laughter as it rose :
Yet none could think him light or frivolous,
False or forgetful of that one deep love ;
'Twas the increasing brightness of the faith
That he was travelling onward to his bride,
Gave his tired heart occasional relief.

Of all their guests none came so frequently
As Harold's chief companion George Glenroy ;
Twice Harold's years, he yet wore age so well,
So lightly, gaily, and with such an air

Of easy brightness and *insouciance*,
That but for the deep lines about his mouth,
When the firm lips compressed themselves in thought,
And but for here and there a silver thread
Amidst the wavelets of his dark brown hair,
You would have said Glenroy was just at prime
Of early manhood's native buoyancy :
High in the law, and reaching higher still,
Ambitious to be worthy of his birth,
Skilled in 'society's' most polished art,
With knowledge of her choicest coteries,
He was a man to please all whom he chose,
But only with a few to win their hearts.
To Harold he was drawn by strong attraction
Of noble friendship, and the generous pride
Of guiding genius thro' its first rash years ;
Thus was he ever welcome at the Grange,
And Harold's sister, Margaret, insensibly
Was suffering gratitude for Harold's sake
To deepen into feelings like to love.

It might be well conjectured that Glenroy,
With his mere outward knowledge of the sex,

Whom he had hitherto in much regarded
As pretty playthings for a vacant hour,
Or weak divinities to be appeased
By costly offerings, subtle flatteries,
Was but half armed against the potent charm
Of a 'true' woman in her sphere of home ;
When he thus met the goddess at her shrine,
And saw the inner life of mind and heart,
Reflect, idealise, intensify,
The outward beauty and calm queenly grace
Of one of nature's fairest handiworks,
'Twas but pure instinct that he should forego
Empty lip-homage, hollow compliment,
And bend his proud heart down in reverent love.

Perhaps the love of such a man as he
Hath a peculiar charm in woman's eyes ;
It carries with it this proud compliment,
That one who hath resisted all the lures
Of merely beauty, fashion, wealth, and rank,
Is conquered by the influence of the soul ;
Doubtless this made more sweet the dream of love

Wherein for one short summer Margaret walked,
Forgetful of the future and the past.

Glenroy was not a man to act in haste,
Or peril this great hazard of his life,
Until with every honourable art,
And every vantage his position gave,
He might forewin, before he asked, consent.
His worldly knowledge showed him from the first
That subtlest flatteries were lost on her ;
Those darts that kindle flame in common minds,
Quenched in the cool self-knowledge of her soul,
Fell harmless, aimless, and were thrown aside :
Therefore he saw his prospect of success
Lay most in truthfulness and honesty ;
That subtleness were worse than useless here,
Save that high subtleness ' sincerity.'
Hence, shaking off the trammels of his art,
Throwing aside the actor's spangled robe,
He wisely strove to win a noble love
By being simply, plainly, what he was :
For he was wise and noble, of large heart,

Generous and kindly, full of sympathy
For all things great and glorious and true;
And now that the benumbing icy crust
Of mere conventional frivolities
Was thawed by the warm gulf-stream of his love,
The glowing power of his intellect
Shone with a brightness heretofore unknown,
And carried others with him like a tide.

There was a charm in sailing on this sea,
This summer sea of joyance ever new;
For Glenroy lavished wealth and thought and care,
To bring new pleasures oft within her reach,
Yet not to seem to bring them with design.
A charm that lulled her to forgetfulness;
Or else, perhaps, with vague unshapen thought
That as it now was, it might so remain,
Nor more, nor less, they to each other be
Than prized companions and true-hearted friends.

Glenroy enlisted Arnold in a plan
Of large important sound benevolence,
And this to set afloat with full success

Required both to stay some time in town ;
So Margaret came with Arnold, and Glenroy
Who held the pass-words to society,
And knew full well the tinsel from the gold
In all the gay amusements of the town,
Chose for them of the choicest with fine taste,
Watching with heed the bias of her mind,
So as to gratify its lightest wish,
And fill her cup of pleasure to the brim.

How fresh and beautiful accustomed things,
Till now so staled by frequency of use,
Became to him once more, as he beheld
Her womanly and fresh delight in them !
'Twas like the glad renewing of his youth,
And deeper grew his love for that bright face,
Those answering eyes of full intelligence.

But now poor Margaret's one short summer dream
Drew near its end and drear awakening !
Glenroy, conceiving that a time was come
When with a fair assurance of success
He might without presumption claim her hand,

Staked his last card upon the fateful chance :
'Dear Margaret,' he said, 'thou noblest, best,—
To say I love thee deeply, ardently,
With a devotion worthy of thyself,
In fulness, strength, and clear sincerity,
Cannot surprise thee, nor I trust offend ;
Have I not seen thee reigning in thy home
With queenly grace, yet sweet simplicity ;
Have I not marked the exquisite pure taste
That guides thy conduct thro' this dizzy world ;
Have I not probed and sounded the grand depths
Of thy fair soul, filled full of harmonies,
Gentle instinctive wisdoms, tender thoughts
And ardent feelings, held in perfect check ;
And can I see thee stand before me now,
In the full pride of lovely womanhood
Nor kneel to thee and pray thee by God's love
To say that I may hope to make thee mine.'

Like as when thunder-clouds swift rolling up,
After the dazzling brilliance of the day,
Bring sudden gloom soon broken by the flash,
And the still hush is startled by the roar

Of awful thunderings and storms of hail,
 Rushing upon the wings of all the winds,—
 So, came the ending of that dream of love ;
 And by the lightning flashes of those words
 Margaret beheld the chasm at her feet.

She saw once more that wild and dreadful look,
 The staggering clutch at thin and empty air,
 The wasted figure pacing through the rooms,
 The ruined home, the shame, the misery,
 That all these wrought upon her girlhood's day :
 She saw her father's seared and blasted life,
 His weary desolation and dull woe,
 She saw the gentle Eva droop and die,
 And noble Arnold in his hours of grief ;
 And with wild burst of tears and bitter wail
 She turned to Glenroy with a choking voice,
 Saying : ' Oh, friend, oh dear, kind, generous friend,
 What have I done to draw you also down
 To this most poignant soul perplexity,
 Wherein with careless blindness I have walked
 Towards a deep gulf that opens at my feet—
 One step—one fatal step—and we are lost.'

Then with strong effort conquering her sobs,
With broken voice, and slowly breaking heart,
She spoke of all those scenes of that dread past,
Concealing nought of their significance.

Whilst those low words of dreadful import fell
Upon his ear, his future seemed to fill
With spectral forms of misery and woe,
Ghastly foreshadowings and forebodings drear ;
For in his own experience he had seen
With what malignant unrelenting clutch
The taint of madness holds on families,
And it had been the pride and boast of his,
(One of the oldest of the Norman barons,
Of whom himself was now surviving heir,)
That no one deadly taint had crossed the blood.
Not his the season of rash headlong youth,
But a cool-judging forward-seeing man,
'Customed by nature, training, habit, thought,
To look beyond the present to the end—
He saw at one swift glance the dreadful risk
To her, himself, and other lives beyond.

Irresolute in wretchedness, he paused,
 Weighing the effort to give up this prize—
 So deeply loved, so truly, tenderly,
 More lovable in self-inflicted grief
 Than even in her joyous sunniness,—
 Against this risk which seemed indeed a crime.

Then, with commiseration, tenderly,
 He took her poor cold hand in both of his,
 And kissing it, as tho' it were a saint's,
 Enshrined in light, where mortal love was awed
 Into a pure and holy reverence,
 He laid it on his heart, and bade her mark .
 Its beatings, and believe, that never more
 It should beat thus beneath another hand,
 That never more the spell of this sole love
 Of all his life, should yield to other spell,
 But that from henceforth, tho' they lived apart,
 And might not ever see each other more,
 He was her's only—and for ever—her's.

* * * * *

She never saw him more thro' all the years
That both lived on the earth, but heard of him
At intervals, and noted with sad pride
That faithfully he kept his word, and dwelt
Alone, with grand ambitions and good deeds.

What is Life ?

WHAT wilt thou with thy poor existence here,
Thou restless, fretful insect callèd man ?
Cloud, sunshine, mist, doubt, smile, and frequent tear,
Fill up the measure of thy little span ;
Thou art but a small part of that great plan
Which shall in Heaven's high life be pinnacled,
Where they who in Earth's battle led the van,
And the full purpose of their being filled,
Shall there inherit and enjoy what here they do but
build.

If thou seek'st pleasure—pleasure in thy grasp,
Like the caught butterfly, that instant dies.
Fame if thou gain'st—'twill sting thee like an asp,
A lustrous snake with venomèd tongue and eyes ;

What the world gives, is nought ; what it denies,
Craved madly and more madly, till a whirl

Of wild, confused, and eddying vanities
O'er life's rough channels rush in foam, and curl
Adown perdition's rocks, the hapless soul to hurl.

Nor fame, nor pleasure seeking, only ease—

A quiet, passive, lotos-eating state,
Not caring either to be pleased or please,
Not loving much, not quite devoid of hate,
Taking events as from the hand of fate,
Avoiding what can be avoided, and enduring

What needs must come, so, let us stand and wait !
A high-bred apathy at least securing—
A stagnant poor philosophy, tho' specious and
alluring !

No—let us look life boldly in the face,

Arm for its trials, meet its dangers, woes,
With cheerful bravery and modest grace
That in the consciousness of duty glows,
And earns from strife sweet moments of repose.

Ambition, pleasure, ease, can ne'er fulfil
God's purpose in man's life—the earth is given
To us, a fallen race, by his good will,
As our last stepping-stone from deepest hell to
heaven.

Pain thou must have in it, yea, sharpest pain,
Until with anguish writhes thy shaken frame,
And pain of mind, beneath the which thy brain
Shall reel bewildered, and lose sense and aim ;
And oft thou must endure the pangs of shame
For wrongs committed, followed, or allowed ;
Keen disappointments,—oft neglected claim,
And grief that whelms thee 'neath its darkest cloud,
When death o'er dearest loved ones throws his fatal
shroud.

Bear then, but not in sullenness, thy pain,—
'Tis fierce and sharp, but worse might thee betide,
Betimes prepare thee for the mental strain ;
'Stand to the helm'—thou may'st the storm outride,
Safe thro' the hurricane thy vessel guide.

Withouten pain, all pleasures cease to please ;
After the storm, with what delight we glide
Over the rippling waves, thro' sunlit seas,
Borne onward tow'rd fair havens by the gentle breeze.

All disappointments, shame, and wrong, and slight,
Are but the lightning of our summer day,
Breaking the clouds they gather—then most bright
When clouds are blackest—letting in a ray
Of light in darkness ; thunders roll away,
And midst the crash of broken hopes we hear
A voice that whispers ' Stronger, better, they
Who nerve them for the tempest without fear,
'Twill make their sky more bright, their after-life more
clear.'

' And love that hath no sequel '—hopeless grief,
The grave's dark portals shut 'gainst aching hearts,
Where from that misery can we find relief?
Here cease, philosophy, thy lesser arts ;
Seek hope thro' Faith alone, for this imparts
A sanction to our hope, and lifts death's hand
From off our shuddering souls ; life starts

Renewed, and those who go before us turn, and stand
On the horizon, pointing, with upward finger, to the
Promised Land.

* * * * *

It ill beseems us, mortal, weak, and blind,
In the full tide and labour of our lives,
When each day brings its duties, and the mind,
Bent upon rightful aims, incessant strives,
And scarce from sleep its needed rest derives ;—
At such time of our life it ill beseems
To waste the precious hour (which ne'er arrives
Again to those who lose it) in vague dreams
Of what may us befall across the Stygian streams.

‘ To-day we labour and to-morrow die ;’
Such be our motto—such our war-cry then,
And like true soldiers, waste nor thought nor sigh,
Save to fulfil our destinies like men.
For all things there is time and place, and when
Our comrades fall around us thick and fast,
And our torn banners sink and rise again ;

We heed no future, and we have no past,
We listen only to the 'Present's' clarion blast.

But when the day of battle giveth place
To the still evening, and the night clouds throw
Their shadows o'er the field, and face to face
'Neath the black vaulted sky with our stern foe
We stand alone in silence and in woe,
Mourning with bitter grief our cherished dead,
Who, on this earth, we never more shall know ;—
'Tis then that Meditation lifts her head,
And bids us pierce the gloom thro' which their spirits
fled.

In that still hour Faith riseth in the heart,
The evening star within the dark profound ;
Slow the black curtains of the death-clouds part,
Opening a new horizon—hallowed ground—
Beyond the western sunset's farthest bound :
Fair golden islands bathed in seas of light,
Where joy and peace th' enfranchised souls surround,
Where knowledge findeth wings to aid her flight
Thro' God's unnumbered realms of ever new delight !

Cherish the inspiring thought ! nor coldly deem
 'Tis the vague raving of an o'erwrought brain ;
Raise high thy vision, for no idle dream
 Thus lifts thy spirit to commune again
 With immortality,—nor fear to strain
Thy mortal powers in soaring to that height,
 But upward, upward trace the glorious train,
Launch thy bold spirit on that sea of light,
Till Hope seems all reality, and Faith aye merged in
 sight !

Thus may'st thou win a vantage ground, from where,
 In those high moments of supernal powers,
Thine eye shall dimly see the regions fair
 Thro' which the soul may range, when the brief hours
 On earth are ended,—how—it may be ours
In the Divine decreement to behold,
 As we float upward thro' the yielding air,
The page of this world's history unfold
In living characters—in actual deeds unrolled.

There is a star that on this winter night
Shines down upon our humble globe of earth—
From that fair star the glancing sparkling light
Hath travelled since the morn of Adam's birth,
Yet reached us not till now ; so wide the girth
And span of space it traverseth,—another star,
(Who looketh heavenward shall see no dearth
Of witnesses,) its first ray shot afar,
When in the deluge closed, Sin's God-defiant war.

And of the vasty interval between,
Whereof no man knows aught but slightest story,
There's not an epoch that hath not been seen
By these bright witnesses of guilt or glory ;
Some watched the patriarchs grow grey and hoary,
Some lighted Babylon, some touched the plain
Where ancient battle, fierce, relentless, gory,
Drowned a whole nation in one sanguine rain,
Repeating thousandfold the crime of first-born Cain.

And one, than all before or since more blest,
First gleamed upon the world on that glad night,

When in obedience to the mute behest
The Syrian shepherds, following its light,
Saw Him, whom Heaven and Earth to reunite
Had come,—thenceforth the Polar Star to be,
Thro' all succeeding ages shining bright,
To lead poor wandering lost mortality
Safely and surely guided, o'er life's troubled sea.

And downward thro' the fields of space descend,
(Like steps of Jacob's ladder, whose beginning
Was in the highest heavens, and whose end
Was earth), the rays in settled order winning
Their way to light a world thus fallen and sinning
In 'settled order' each one reaches earth,
As witness to the end or the beginning
Of each event, as each event occurreth,
Be it an infant's death, or mighty empire's birth.

Mark we the converse of this wondrous law—
Earth's light returneth to the distant star
In the like time and order—say we soar
On wings ideal to some point afar,

Retaining vision keen by which we are
Permitted still to see the world below,—

We shall have travelled backward in Time's car,
The light will then be falling in full glow
On by-gone scenes and deeds,—thus may we see and
know

From varying points of distance each event
Of earth's eventful life, tracing back
Each deed, each doer, action, and intent ;
Not with the vague unsatisfying track
Of dim tradition, or brain-wearying rack
Of jangling histories, but, with vision real,
Be present at the doing of each act :
Sight, sight alone, may thus the Past reveal,
To wisdom's highest knowledge set its crowning seal.

Bless we the Lord of Heaven ! of whose grace
It is permitted to our clouded sense
Thus dimly now to see what, face to face
(So it is promised), in the realm's immense
Of near eternity, with light intense,

We shall behold unclouded. Bless the Lord !

Who to His humblest creatures showeth whence
And how such things may be, and doth afford
To earth a ray of glory, by Seraphs aye adored.

Yea, 'near eternity;' think we well how near

We day by day approach the unfathomed deep;
Not e'en in thought repeat the shallow sneer,

That since erst-while the fathers fell asleep,
The world remaineth as it was; 'twill steep

Thy soul in fatal lethargy. Awake, awake,
Before it is too late—awake and weep
Away thy blindness—striving thus to make
Thy peace with Heaven again, for Holy Jesus' sake,

Who died that thou might'st live, not sleep and dream :

His life at once thy motive and thy guide;
Not idly floating down the flowing stream
That carrieth man away as with a tide,
But planting landmarks by the river's side,
And beacon lights where rocks and shallows lie,
Shedding afar a clear and warning gleam,

That future generations, sailing by,
May mark them and avoid, with glad and grateful eye.

* * * * *

Backward thro' countless ages may we find
Traces of man's existence on this earth,
Onward thro' countless ages may the mind
See in a far futurity new birth.
Of mere chronologies 'tis little worth
That science and religion should debate ;
Such wranglings well might move the devil's mirth :
Religion's not an *epoch*, but a *state* ;
God's mercy and Christ's love depend not on a date.

Let history by knowledge be corrected,
Howe'er much prized, however much revered,
An error proved an error be rejected,
Tho' to our earliest sympathies endeared,
No shock to our true faith need thence be feared.
Truth freed from doubtful matter shines more fair,
Like gold by fire from baser metal cleared.
Quench not the fire ! fear not but Truth can bear
The seven-times heated furnace in its fiercest glare !

Error from truth 'tis well to disentangle,
And the attempt need not provoke much rancour ;
O'er dates and figures bishops need not wrangle,
As tho' they were the Church's sole sheet-anchor ;
A wrong opinion surely cannot canker,
And if 'tis right, the end of the dispute
Is certain as the laws of the triangle.
Cease, then, to call bad names, and hiss and hoot,
Accept with grace if right, if wrong the wrong confute.

And ye whose self-appointed task it seemeth
To seek small errors in their smallest forms,
Disproving learnedly what man esteemeth
More highly than he need, and raising storms
Amidst the teacups, heedless of the qualms
Of him who does not like the pains of thought,
And him whom controversy quickly warms ;—
Catching at straws not worth much e'en when caught,
Fighting fierce battles out, with small result when
fought ;—

Be not self-blinded by the learned dust
Yourselves have raised amidst th' excited crowd ;

Seek ye a purer faith, a holier trust,
To guide men safely thro' the passing cloud
Of wordy warfare, clamorous and loud,
And lead them up to higher mountain slope,
Whence they may form an estimate more just
Of Time's true measure, and of Life's true hope,
Of mortal place and powers the object and the scope.

Lift up the narrowed microscopic eye
From shallow confidence in subtle creed ;
Teach those who on a form of words rely
These are but Dead Sea apples in their need ;
Far nobler contemplations claim their heed—
Thoughts that might plumb the soul's remotest deep,
Hopes that would reach man's promised destiny,
Fears that may rouse the sinner from his sleep,
And gulfs of time and space that Faith can boldly leap.

Say, what is Time to man, when in the sleep
Of death's undreaming slumbers he is laid ?—
No monk-helped purgatory the soul will keep
Hovering 'twixt earth and heaven ; to the dead

Time cannot be ; unconsciousness profound
Will bridge the ages that may yet be sped,
Ere earth fulfil her fore-appointed round,
And all her millions rise at the last trumpet's sound.

Empire that like the sun rose in the East,
May traverse round again its ordered course ;
New Babylons may see Belshazzar's Feast,
Pride, born of power, extinguished in remorse ;
Again the world be ruled by mere brute force,
Our own fair cities crumble into dust,
Our Alps be riven, our rivers change their source,
And all the subtle arts we boast and trust
Be 'whelmed and lost in the inevitable ' must ;'

Or with a happier augury believe
Human intelligence expanding ever,
Thro' countless ages opening to receive
New light and wisdom from the Gracious Giver :
Knowledge an ever deepening widening river,
Bearing man forward on its glorious tide,
Till art nor science hath not in its quiver

One bolt unshot, one single aim untried,
Nature no question left for mortals to decide.'

Spur thine imagination ! let her speed
 Into futurity's extremest bound ;
Ride with slack rein thy fleetest wingèd steed
 Of freest fancy, o'er the fairy ground
 Of possibilities ; above, beyond, around,
Girdle the earth with epochs ever new ,
 Invest her with a future so profound
That seas shall rage where inland forests grew,
And citied continents arise from ocean's deepest blue !

What then ?—thou diest to-day, to-night, to-morrow,
 Or livest out thy threescore years and ten ;—
A passing grief, a soon forgotten sorrow,
 Shall mark thy exit from thy fellow-men ;
 Thou diest, and time for thee is ended then.
Tho' the world's age by million years be numbered,
 Of time nor space thou hast no longer ken ;
'Twill seem but for an instant thou hast slumbered,
When thou dost wake again, with mortal sins encum-
bered.

On that dread morn, with instant sudden change,
As from our death-beds we shall seem to rise,
Unknowing whether long or short the range
Of time and action since fond tearful eyes
Bent o'er our couch and watched the parting sighs;
Round us the loved ones still will seem to press,
To catch the soul's last accents ere it flies,
Still shall we feel the yearning last caress,
Still hear the choking sobs of overwrought distress.

To such as sleep in faith, blest hope of gladness !
To pass from this world's trouble, peril, care,
Growing anxieties, and deepening sadness,
At once—for ever—into heaven's pure air,
Without blank interval; rejoining there
The noblest, purest, loveliest, earth hath seen
In that bright region of 'The Presence,' where
Sin, pain, and sorrow come no more between
God and His creature man, with baneful cloudy screen.

But, full of fearful meaning is the thought
That time hath no dominion in the tomb,

To those who boldly sin and set at nought
The Day of Judgment, as a threat'ned doom,
Far off—indefinite—that doth but loom
In dim uncertain distance ; 'tis a warning
That well might darken sin's fierce glare with gloom ;
So short a night to herald such a morning,
Must surely make them tremble e'en amidst their
scorning !

Near as the headsman's axe to wretch condemned,
The Judgment follows death ; nor means to shrive
Is granted those who warnings aye contemned,
While in the body dwelt their souls alive ;
Here—here alone, is time and place to strive,
Thy future hell to make or heaven to win ;
Swift, sure as death, the sentence will arrive,
The Crown for Virtue and the Scourge for Sin ;
This mortal life but ends, th' immortal to begin.



Second Sequel to the Story of a Life.

CAN we then hold communion with the dead
And speak as tho' they heard our wild appeal ?
Arouse their spirits from death's stern repose,
And summon them before our judgment seat ?

* * * *

Margaret—on that sad evening when Glenroy
Left her her desolation, and went forth
To seek his own and dwell therein for aye—
After vain praying, rose and clasped her head,
And, pushing back her hair from fevered brow,
Spoke wildly in the presence of the moon :—
' Oh Grandsire ! cause of all these varied woes,
Who in dull ignorance or carelessness
Spread this wide circling bane thro' all our lives,—
From this my living tomb I speak to thee,
In thy scarce deeper tomb of seeming death !

Dost thou not turn thee in thy narrow couch
With a sharp twitch of pain uneasily,
As each keen arrow of high destiny
Striketh down one by one thy fated race ?
Oh Grandsire ! hadst thou but in part foreseen
This fearful multiple of misery,
Thou might'st have passed unblamed, and we unborn !
I curse not thee, but hast thou not cursed us ?'

The lightning flashes of this lurid thought
Brought back into her eyes the blinding rain,
And now that none were by to cause restraint,
She strove no longer to control her tears
Nor wrestle with her grief, but gave full sway
To stormy sorrow in its wildest moods.
Long time she was as if by demons torn,
Who fought and chased each other thro' her brain,
But by renewed prayer she cast them out,
And slowly, passion's fierceness lulled away,
Leaving her sunk in an exhausted calm
Which suffered meeker, kinder thoughts to break
Thro' the thick darkness of her clouded heart.

She thought of her young sisters, whom to guard
From anguish such as this must be her care,
Of Harold, whose impulsive rashness, warned
By her experience, might be held in check,
She thought of Arnold needing aid for these,
And for the tender nurseling, Eva's child ;
Thence saw she, tho' the crown of this world's life
Was by her own hands shattered in the dust,
There yet was much to live for and achieve,
Ere she could win that higher brighter crown
Promised to those, who patient to the end,
Continue in well-doing thro' all time.

Stilled by the peaceful influence of these thoughts,
Yet very weary of her saddened life,
A welcome languor closed her eyes in sleep ;
Sleep, full refreshing childlike dreamless sleep,
Soothing the fevers of the heart and brain,
Gave her fresh power to meet and bear her fate ;
For tho' slow wakening after night like this
Brought back an aching sense of pain and loss,
The daily duties, as the day wore on,
Beguiled her mind from introspective thoughts.

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Arnold had scarce supposed it possible
That Glenroy, whom he knew despised the sex,
And whom he thought ambitious, cold, and proud,
Could so have changed his nature as to love ;
Besides, his confidence in Margaret
Forbad him to have any fear for her ;
But now with feelings of some self-reproach,
He saw by Glenroy's absence, Margaret's eyes,
That Love had blinded prudence, conquered pride,
That Love had passed with Sorrow in his train.

At once, and yet without suspicious haste,
He made good reasons for returning home,
Knowing that home's full occupations, cares,
Constant requirements for thought and act,
Would best assuage the pains of broken hope.
No need for spoken words of sympathy,—
The kindly pressure of the firm friend's hand,
The fatherly compassion in his eyes,
The ceaseless care to furnish for each day
Some little pleasure to divert her mind,
Some source of interest to employ her thoughts,
Told Margaret, with a silent eloquence,

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How fully, truly, deeply, Arnold shared
The aching sorrow that he strove to heal.

So the soft balm of consolation fell
Morning and evening like refreshing dews,
And the parched desert of her once seared life
Put forth new leaves and blossoms to the sun.

Again the influence of a good deed done
Gave its reflective cheerfulness and warmth
Back into Arnold's nature, and the strain
He ever made for her sake to seem bright
Was borne more easily by constant use ;
A higher power and force of character
Grew on them both, that so with gentle ease
They swayed the minds of Harold and the girls
Towards great ambitions and all noble aims.

Harold, impatient of the law's delays,
(Those tardy honours that oft come so late
That he who wins them hath lost joy in them,)
Was pushing on to fame in other ways ;
His writings had been kindly spoken of

As indicating promise of great things,
And in the sunshine of that genial praise
His skill and powers expanded day by day.
One instinct of true genius he possessed,
Without which none deserve or win renown,
He loved his work much more for his work's sake
Than for the profit that might come of it ;
He wished for wealth to turn it to good use,
He longed for fame to bring him near the minds
Of the great master-spirits of the age,
But gold ne'er clogged the ink upon his pen,
Nor hope of fame subdued his love of truth.
His poems were his realm, wherein he reigned
King, and creator absolute, supreme,
And with his mind's embodiments he held
Intercommunion perfect and complete ;
Oft-times with them he wept in sympathy,
And joyed with unfeigned gladness in their joy,
Fiercely with them he hurled fierce scorn at wrong ;
Or when some full emotion would burst forth,
Inspiring with high music all its words,
With rich delight his hands would hold the chords,
And strike deep diapasons thro' his soul.

Fair Mabel set his words to melody,
 And Maude would paint for him his favourite scenes,
 Whilst Margaret and Arnold criticised,
 With kind but useful candour, all their works.

The little Eva, grown into a child
 Unspoiled, was still the plaything of the house,
 Whose sparkling mirth stirred laughter in the rest.

Sustained and happy in their mutual help,
 They felt the full delight of growing powers,
 The charm of earnest and soul-filling work ;
 Ne'er did that yawning demon dull Ennui
 Possess them with its sickly weariness,
 But hours and days and months flew gladly by,
 Dropping bright feathers from the wings of time,
 The which they gathered to adorn their lives.
 Each season as it came brought pleasantness,
 Even old Winter with its days of gloom,
 Raw chilly rain, mists, sleet, and dreary thaw,
 Had cheerful compensations in the frosts
 Of crisp invigorating days, when snow

Covered earth's darkness with a heavenlike robe
Of pure and brilliant whiteness, jewelled o'er
With the fine dust of diamonds, which the sun
Lit up with sparkling lustrous colouring,
Giving an aspect as of fairy land
To the bare branchlets of the leafless trees ;
Or, bending downward to fantastic shapes
The heavy yielding boughs of dark green firs,
Forming stalactite grottos o'er the walks,
Halls of enchantment and Aladdin's caves
Amidst the over-arching evergreens.

How glorious ! in such weather to inhale
The power-giving air that braces up
The nerves to such a tension, that to walk,
To run, to leap, to skate across the lake,
Or (with the horses shod with pointed spikes)
To ride at speed over the frozen snow—
Silent, except for that inspiring sound
Of the crisp crashing ice beneath their hoofs—
Seems but the impulse of rejoicing strength.
And then the bright long evenings when the blaze

Of crackling logs, aiding the mellow lamps
Fills the well-curtained room with genial glow,
And gives fresh inspiration to the tasks.

Sometimes, at not infrequent intervals,
A few well chosen and congenial guests
Would gather round the hospitable board,
With pleasant gladness and gay interchange
Of thought for thought in glancing play of words;
Sometimes an old or new friend would come down
From the far distant London, bringing news
Of that vast restless sea of human life.
This partial contact with the outer world
Of bustling, strong, robust, external thought,
Rubbed off all rust of eccentricity,
Which elsewhere country life is apt to bring.

Times of refreshment, periods of rest,
Alternate with our trials in this life,
And this to Margaret and Arnold proved
One of the longest, last, and pleasantest.
In the enjoyment of those blithe young hearts
They joined with perfect sympathy, and laid

Their own dark sorrows in deep memories,
So that their shadows fell not on the walls.—
But deeper shadows were impending now
Upon the path that all had yet to walk.

For three long years Arnold had well endured
The wearying anxieties of law ;
Its pompous forms so cunningly devised
To waste the suitor's time and health, and means ;
Its blind uncertainty, hap-hazard chance,
Its fostering indulgence for the rogue,
And licensed brow-beatings of honesty ;
Its shameless, wanton, boasted advocacy
Of wrong 'gainst right, its fish-eyed apathy
For anything save fees and precedents ;
Its judgments made, reversed, and set aside
In regular, incessant alternations,
Like swingings of a solemn pendulum ;
Its contradictions and bewilderments,
Its sickening senseless jargons and delays,
Had fallen on him like a legal curse.

This suit was forced upon him by a fool,
 Backed by a knavish lawyer whose design
 Had no less limit to its wicked greed,
 Than by a subtle fraud to dispossess
 Arnold of his estate,—making his tool
 (The puppet he set up,) pretend a right,
 By some incautious flaw in an old will,
 To all the lands and manors of the Grange.
 Arnold at first had looked upon the claim
 With such contemptuous pity as a lion
 Might disregard the snarlings of a cur
 Who fain would filch from him a toothsome bone;
 But Hinkley and his lawyer Amos worked
 Thro' fair and foul to compass their intent,
 Suborned false witness, tampered with old deeds,
 Forged signatures, and stooped to perjury.

Hinkley at best was but a stubborn dolt,
 Who, having been cajoled into belief
 That what he longed-for was, or might be his,
 Had held henceforth blind faith in that false right,
 With stolid, fixt, stupendous obstinacy,
 Shutting his eyes, and butting with his head

Against all right or reason in his way ;
And Amos, like a skilful matador,
Goaded him on to rage, and craftily
Rustled old parchments in his greedy ears,
Until he ran a'muck into this slough,
Where their souls sunk, submerged in foul success.
For little need of prophet to foretell
That the law's final judgments, wrenched awry
By means unscrupulous, should give the rogue
A seeming right to do a wicked wrong ;
And still less need of prophecy to see
That, having paid the devil the full price
For lands and gold, he would not lose much time
Ere taking up his purchase, to enjoy
Such gross enjoyment as might come of it ;
And not the least to natures such as his,
The power of harsh, insulting, swift ejection.

Arnold had hitherto, thro' all these years,
Made light of this drear law-suit in the home,
And tho' full oft much wearied and o'er-worn
By its slow, tortuous, blind entanglements,
Yet having Glenroy's practised subtlety,

And Harold's whole-soul labours in his cause,
Feeling besides, as honest men do feel,
Instinctive doubt that other men can lie,
Instinctive faith that right will still prevail,
He had not let its troubles weigh him down.
But as the end drew near, and Harold oft
Rushed down with messages from George Glenroy,
Revealing more and more a dangerous case,
The constant harass gave him sleepless nights
And aching brain and languid arm and pen.
His face, once bronzed with healthful sports or toils,
Grew pale and sunken, and the cheerful smile
Was sometimes pent between close pain-drawn lips,
Yet, ever ready to light up again
To cheer the gentle inmates of his house.
Yes! the kind eyes grew kindlier day by day,
The genial voice more tender in its tones,
With thought that these his loved ones, drawing near
To many sorrows, claimed a deeper love!
So, when the last decree of hoodwinked law
Upon injustice set its final seal,
And Hinkley, with the power it gave him, pressed
Immediate surrender of the Grange,—

There came full suddenly that mournful day,
The 'Last but one,' in that most dear old home.

'Twas the delicious spring, when tiny flowers
Under the trees, along the wooded walks,
Were peeping up half-frightened 'midst dead leaves ;
The bright pure green upon the hawthorn hedge,
The bursting leaf-buds of the branching limes,
The lovely rose-bloom of the wall-fruit trees,
And the fresh verdure creeping o'er the fields,
Each brought its separate promise of new joys
Of blossoms, flowers, fruits, and new-mown hay.
The soft fresh air came flowing thro' the rooms,
Welcomed by open windows ; whilst the sun
Put out the feeble blinking morning fire,
And reigned again supreme, sole source of warmth.
Meantime the merry birds, from early morn,
With hurrying wings intent on building nests,
Rang out their several key-notes of delight.
But how those joyous notes once, once so dear,
Jarred on the ears of those who all the night
Had tossed in restless feverish forebodings—
Mabel shall tell, as creeping first down stairs,

She woke sad music to an undertone
Of softly mournful natural complaint,—

‘ Little birds, thoughtless birds, do not sing to-day,
Be not merry at our mourning, for we go away,
Oh ! be silenced by our sadness,
See you not our tears ?
We are leaving you and gladness,
Leaving you for years.
Oh ye birds, cruel birds !
Why are ye so gay ?
Sorrow, sorrow for to-morrow,—
We must go away.

‘ Little birds, eager birds, leave awhile your prey,
We have fed you thro’ the winter, now we go away,
He who cometh will not feed you
Whilst thick snows are lying,
He who cometh will not heed you,
Though you may be dying.
Gather once more to the window where you used
to stand,
Never dreading the outspreading of a loving hand.

' Little birds, busy birds, do not build to-day,
 We have never in the Spring-time ta'en your nests away,
 But our nest from us is taken,
 See you not our tears?
 Do not let us feel forsaken,
 Come and share our fears.
 Oh, ye birds, foolish birds!
 Build no more to-day,
 Men will scare you, men will snare you,
 When we go away.'

* * * * *

Her invocation brought no restless birds
 To listen to its simple mournfulness,
 But at the sound of song the sisters came
 And drew around poor Mabel, where she sate
 Tearful, disconsolate, with heavy thoughts,
 To change with her such comfort as they could.
 Breakfast was brought, but went untouched away,
 The servants waited for their last commands,
 The horses were brought round for the last ride.
 Which dreamily and absently they took
 Thro' the old forest and across the plain,
 And homeward for the 'last time' to that home,

Then to the needful, but most hateful task
Of final preparations for their flight,
They turned with weary hands and aching hearts.

The bluff old steward came and rendered up
His last accounts,—a husk was in his voice,
As with a clumsy reverence he bowed
To Margaret, and said, ‘God bless you, madam.’
And there arose a moisture in his eyes
When they were turned upon the younger girls,
Which might have passed unseen, had not the child
(The little Eva, plaything of the house,)
Asked him to kiss her, ‘just for this last time.’
Then the big burly nature of the man
Broke down in weakness, weaker than a child’s,
Till Arnold laid a hand upon his arm,
And with his own eyes showing scarce-quelled tears,
Spoke to him words of hopeful, manly cheer,
Saying, ‘Good trusty friend, to you I owe
A master’s thanks for faithful service done;
My fortunes wane, as men count gain and loss,
And much these gentle ones must now endure
Of seeming hardship, loss, and girlish grief

But all's not lost, we still can make a home
In the far distant city, where be sure
They will be ever glad to see your face
When chance or need shall bring you near to us :
Meantime, in patience, keep to the old place,
Serve its new master well, as you have me,
And tho' it prove hard service, harsh and cold,
(As much I fear from what I hear of him,)
Yet stay, and so earn better wage in heaven.'

All thro' the weary day the lumb'ring vans
Followed each other laden with the goods,
And feverish disorder reigned within ;
Room after room grew empty, desolate,
And loomed out strangely large, and gaunt, and drear.
The halls and passages were choked with heaps
Of household treasures, great unwieldy things,
In grim incongruous chaos, wildly placed
By flurried servants in grotesque confusion ;
And Arnold urged confusion to its height,
Hurrying still forward the dismantlement,
Wishing to leave less time for useless griefs,
Less opportunity for vain regrets

So (with a like intent) ere evening came,
 He, in a seeming change of purpose, bade
 The girls prepare at once to travel on
 Part way tow'rd London, now their future home.

Then, hand in hand, with slow and thoughtful steps,
 They wandered thro' the dear and well-known walks,
 Lingering regretfully at many a point
 Of oft-admired beauty, to drink in
 One more delight, altho' now mixt with pain.
 They visited each garden, cottage, farm,
 Nor yet forgot the stables, where each horse
 Received with arching neck the last caress.
 Then, warned by Arnold's cheery chiding voice
 Pretending anger at their long delay,
 They hastened to the carriage at the door,
 And gazing with deep love at the old home
 With wistful hearts, and tear-bedimmèd eyes,
 They bade one sad farewell to It, and All,
 And drove, for the last time, across the park.

Movement or action,—change of work or place,—
 These are the simplest, best restoratives,

When brooding sorrows else would weigh us down.
 Never to sit in idle melancholy,
 Nursing a sickly, pining, useless grief,
 Bewailing peevishly, with unchecked tears,
 Small selfish woes and personal distress,
 Blind and regardless of the wide-spread care
 That plants a crown of thorns on every head ;
 Never to sulk in hard and morbid pride,
 That shrivels up affections in the heart,
 And glories in the sanctimonious face
 Of injured innocence or sour indifference—
 Never for such ends cometh sorrow down
 In bursting rains upon the plains of life,
 Destroying all our cherished fruits and flowers ;
 Not such its purpose, meaning, or intent.

No ! let affliction work its perfect work,
 Seek not to be nor less nor more than men,
 Yield to its softening influence on your pride,
 Trust, tho' you cannot see, God's ruling hand,
 Confess your weakness, give a time to tears,
 Then gather up such comfort as you may ;
 Making your burden lighter by such means

As lie within the compass of your reach.
 Go dig and delve, or ply the woodman's axe,
 Mount your good horse, or use an earnest pen,
 Away to distant lands, or change your thoughts
 By converse with the minds of other men.
 Thus best may each and all, in our degree,
 'Take arms against our sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them.'

Such the philosophy that Arnold found
 Thro' his eventful life stood him good stead
 Both for himself and others: wherefore now
 He carried out a predetermined plan,
 To seek assuagement of the keen regrets
 That fell upon them all at loss of home
 And home's dear cherished customs and strong ties,
 By change of scene and outward circumstance.
 His fortunes, tho' much crippled, still sufficed
 To justify the wise extravagance
 Of travelling to London by the road,
 With his own horses and their equipage.
 So then, by easy stages travelling on
 Eastward and northward thro' the rich champaign

Of lovely England's fairest country side,
 In that delicious season, a warm Spring,
 Their hearts soon felt this healing influence.
 Partly for prudence, partly with design,
 Their halt was made, whenever possible,
 At quiet, quaint, old-fashioned country inns,
 T' accustom these his Charges to the change
 From luxury to plainer homeliness.

Few changes are more useful to the mind
 Than travelling; it seemeth to break up
 Old habitudes of thought, and gives us power
 To reconstruct from out this broken world
 A newer, stronger, wider sphere of life :
 We seem to realise with clearer view
 That all this life is little more or less
 Than a long journey to a distant home ;
 And if upon the way one night we lodge
 At some poor wayside inn, or mountain hut,
 The next at grand palatial hotel,
 We find that relish for our food depends
 Much more on hunger earned by abstinence
 Than on the daintiest diet gold can buy ;

We find that sleep is sweeter on clean straw,
 (If we have won it by good exercise,)

Than 'neath silk curtains upon bed of down,
 When sluggish Indolence with Night-mare strives.

Thus the external adjuncts of our lot
 Loose the strong grip that custom gave to them,
 And we begin to think it possible
 That, having 'food and raiment' for our needs,
 We might in gladness 'be therewith content.'

Seasoned by this experience, and prepared
 By frequent converse, for the altered life
 They henceforth must in common prudence live—
 The sombre, dull, and dark old London house,
 In the antique unfashionable square,
 Did not weigh down their spirits as it might,
 Had they plunged suddenly from light to gloom.

Moreover now they proved the potent charm
 Of deep abstractive study, to absorb
 And carry off attention from the things
 Of mere external customary use ;
 For, after a short interregnum given
 To see the matters new and notable

Which a great city ever has to show,
 They eagerly resumed their several arts,
 And soon became scarce conscious of aught else
 Save gradual perfection and advance
 Tow'rd full command in that bright inner realm
 Wherein the soul makes its own dwelling-place.

Mabel's soft music took a deeper tone,
 Gaining in power and touching mournfulness,
 'Neath which the swelling undertone of hope
 Would break at times like sunshine thro' a cloud ;
 Maude revelled in the treasures of art
 Left by the master workers of each age
 As glorious legacies to us their heirs ;
 Whilst Harold found, as all true poets find,
 That Sorrow seemèd, like the prophet's rod,
 To strike the dried-up channel in the rock,
 And bring forth clearer fountains from the soul.
 Devoted Margaret, in household cares
 More occupied than ever, still found time
 To train with skilful judgment Eva's child :
 And Arnold, with a stronger, warmer zeal,
 Joined heart and soul with a few noble men

To aid with pen and voice that rightful cause
To which in prosperous days he gave but gold.

Heaven's blessing upon Duty ! Fair Content
Brought them once more a period of rest,
And many simple pleasures soon sprung up,
Like wild flowers after heavy April rains.
Thus (had God willed it so) they would have lived
In grateful acceptance of their lot,
Earning the solace cheerful patience brings,
And gathering comfort from the passing years.
But it was *not* to be ; for He who tries
The hearts of men to prove them to the end,
Decreed one bitterest trial, and the last.

How soon it came, I scarce have heart to tell !
Yet told it must be, to give strength to such
As bend beneath afflictions like to these.

The little Eva, whose fond ardent love,
Flowing o'er Arnold's desolated heart,
Had thawed it back to life and tenderness,
She only, (still too much a tender child

To have resource in what sustained the rest)
 Pined with a childish longing for her fields,
 Her flowers and gardens, and the fresh sea-breeze :
 But with a timid shrinking gentleness
 Feeling, much more than knowing, 'twould give pain
 To him she loved, if she but spoke of it,
 She hid her longing, and in secret pined :
 Thus weakening day by day and month by month,
 When hot unhealthy August brought the reek
 Of noisome exhalations thro' the streets,
 From ill-made sewers or alleys foul with filth,
 They struck upon her with their fatal breath,
 Instilling such strong poison in her blood
 That hope was none to save the frail young life.

* * * * *

Oh ! misery of miseries, to see
 That sweet young life thus ebbing hopelessly
 Before his eyes whose last bright light it was.
 Oh ! wretched helplessness of mortal means,
 To stay for e'en a day that dread disease,
 That closing up the portals by which aid
 Might minister support, perchance restore

The sinking strength to battle with its foe,
Shuts up the life within a sentient death.

* * * * *

Vainly poor baffled Arnold tried in turn
Loving entreaties, firm authority,
Persuasion, promises, and gentle force,
Striving to throw in succour in the shape
Of wine, or medicine, or nourishment.
His efforts only added the last drop
To the child's wretchedness and his despair,
Filling his cup of sorrow to the brim ;
For the revulsion from these loathed things,
Acting upon her weak and fevered mind,
Made him who urged them, hateful to her sight,
Until, with frightened and averted look,
And wailing moan that pierced him like a sword,
She turned away whenever he drew near.
A child's aversion—ah ! how hard to bear
By one who loved her dearer than himself !
The last few days on earth to pass away
Without one word, one look or fond caress !
Pray God that few may know how hard this is !

Without 'one look' ! for when the end was come
Of the faint-flickering, wasted, dying flame,
And with that strange unearthly sudden blaze
Of radiant ecstasy, the face suffused,
And the dulled eyes beamed forth with mystic joy,
As if the first rays of the rising sun
That shines on Paradise had struck on them,
The look was wholly Heaven-ward, nor turned
E'en for an instant on the father's face.

No ! not again shall empty words pourtray
The strong man wrestling with a stronger grief !
Ye who have seen a man break down in tears,
Hopeless, spasmodic, uncontrollable,
Can well remember how this painful sight
Betrays the mortal anguish that o'ercomes
The pride and instinct of mere manliness.
Sufficeth, that the spasm passed away,
Slowly subsiding to an aching pain
Endurable ; and slightly lessening
As the grey hairs blanched slowly, and the years
Flowed on their solemn, silent, ceaseless course,
And bore him on their surface tow'rd the end.

Yes ! ' on their surface ' still ; so buoyed by faith,
Sustained by such undying trust and hope,
That mortal sorrow could not drown his love.

Once, in the blackest midnight of his grief,
When the external heavens and his soul
Alike were moonless, starless, deep in gloom,
Need was, that he rode forth into the night ;
And as he rode, the light within his heart
Seemed to grow weak and pale and powerless,
When suddenly two voices spoke to him ;
Yes ! even to the outward ear of sense
They spoke to him, in soft and loving tones !
Then with a holy joy and gratitude
He bowed his head upon his horse's mane,
And answering with awe,—he knew henceforth
That by God's grace, in this his darkest hour
He had vouchsafed him converse with the dead !
Thenceforth God's lamp within him never paled,
But shone upon his pathway thro' the world,
However drear or dark externally.

* * * * *

To many he was known in after years

As one who came in times of great distress
Unasked, to help them in their pining want
With food and clothing, and plain manly words
Of homely comfort and encouragement ;
But well they knew no tricks of sham distress
Would aught avail with him to draw his purse,
He helped those only, who would help themselves.

The outward framework of the man had shrunk
To thin attenuation, but the lamp
Of the indwelling light shone brightlier forth,
And his sweet smile, like holy moonlight, fell
Upon the children's faces, as he passed
Thro' squalid alleys and foul noisy courts ;
And they, attracted by his tall gaunt form,
Looked up to jibe,—but seeing that sad smile
So full of pity, love, and tenderness,
Stood silent, quelled and softened, from their play.
Old crones would stay their gossip as he passed,
Forgetting in his greeting half their wrongs ;
Rough lads and brazen girls shrank back abashed
By that intense heart-penetrating eye ;

E'en scolding shrews and surly artizans
Yielded him rough instinctive reverence.

So passed the evening of that storm-tried life,—
And when at last night came—much longed-for night!
Which was to usher in the glorious dawn,
Death found so little left of mortal taint
Yet needing to be purified by pain,
That he removed him with a touch so slight
And seemingly so gentle, as to leave
No trace of the cold hand upon the heart,
Save a slight shudder—followed by a smile.

If these poor legends seem too full of sadness,
Reader, begrudge them not a passing tear ;
Then turn to thy bright life, with brighter gladness,
Or bear thy lighter cross with braver cheer.

Haply but few must wear such crowns of thorn,—
And fewer still if men would heed this story,—
Yet mark ! the fiery cross, when nobly borne,
Lights up Death's glen with flashing gleams of glory.

If thou would'st fain see joy with sorrow blend,
E'en ' Here ' in lives by fiercest tempest tried,
Follow young Harold's fortunes to the end,
And watch how storm and blast he doth outride.





